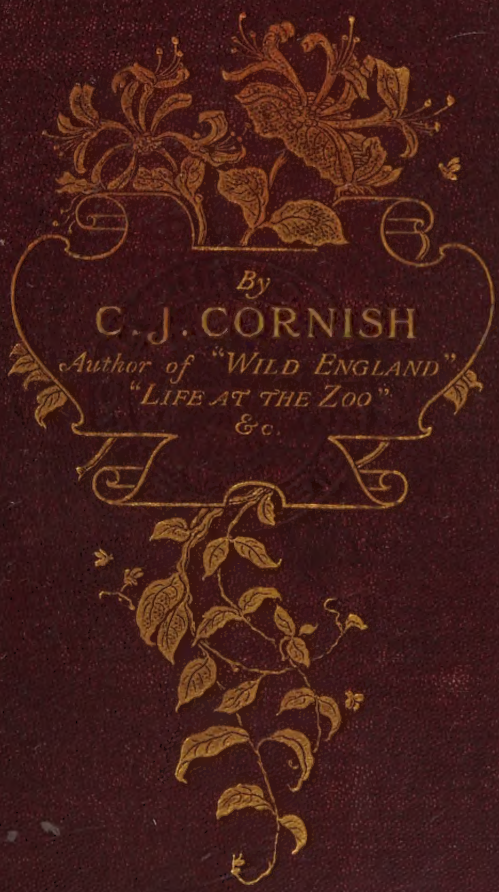
THE NEW FOREST AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT



By
C. J. CORNISH
Author of "Wild England"
"Life at the Zoo"
&c.

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AND
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New Forest from near Castle Malwood.

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THE NEW FOREST
AND
THE ISLE OF WIGHT

By

C. J. CORNISH

Author of "Wild England," "Life at the Zoo," &c.

WITH EIGHT PLATES
AND MANY OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE NEW FOREST

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THE NEW FOREST

CHAPTER I

THE CENTRAL FOREST AND ITS CAPITAL

The wholly foreign character of its creation—Its vast extent—The alleged cruelty in its afforesting—Modern views—The nature of forest laws—The forest preserved by their survival—Lyndhurst the centre and capital of the Forest—The Verderers' Hall and Court—The pilgrimage to Mark Ash—Swan Green—The wild and open forest—The Lymington stream—The hush of the forest—The progressive splenaour of the trees—The wealth of ornament in the old woods—The charcoal-burner's hut—Voices of the forest—Alone in the sanctuary.

The historical link which the New Forest has with the associations in every English mind is fixed to the era of the Normans. It was the foreign Norman and Angevin Kings of England who made and used the forest. It lay in the same county, and within a ride of their palace and capital at Winchester; and they took their sport from Malwood on their way to Rouen, riding down after a few days' deer-shooting to Beaulieu or Lymington, where the galleys waited to take them across the Channel, much as the royal yachts wait to take Her Majesty Queen Victoria across the Solent to Osborne.

But the subsequent part played by the forest as a hunting ground for kings, and a district exempt from the general law of the land, and at the absolute disposal of the sovereign, is entirely eclipsed by the picturesque and dramatic incidents which tradition has assigned to its violent creation by the first Norman monarch, and its requital, not only by the violent death of the second, but by those of two other children

of the Conqueror in this fatal precinct. His son, Richard, who was supposed to be in his disposition the special image of his father, when not yet of an age to be girded with the belt of knighthood, was the first victim. He is said to have been fatally injured by the branch of a tree when riding after a stag; and there is a record in Domesday Book of lands restored by his father to their rightful owner as an offering for Richard's soul.[1] The second son of the Conqueror who died in the forest was another Richard, an illegitimate child, whose death seems to have been forgotten in the greater catastrophes of the death of the elder Richard and of Rufus, which preceded and followed it.

Whatever belief is to be given to the tale of cruelty in its afforesting, the size and character of the district, which the Conqueror devoted to his use as a "single and mighty Nimrod," by the simple act of putting it under forest law, is a measure of the scope of that imperial mind. The area was as large as that of the Isle of Wight. It was bounded on the north by the line from the river Avon to the river Ouse, separating Hampshire from Wiltshire; by the river Avon on the west, down to Christchurch. By the sea from Christchurch to Calshot Castle; by the Southampton Water, and by the river Ouse. Within these boundaries are about 224 square miles, containing 143,360 acres of land, of which even now 90,000 acres are still within the boundary of the forest. Its natural features were such as to make it a hunter's paradise. From the swirling salmon river at Christchurch, to the wide lagoon of Southampton Water, it exhibited and still contains, almost every natural feature which made the forests, "*regum penetralia et eorum maximæ deliciæ*," "the chief delight of kings, and their secret and secure retreat." Fronted by the sheltered waters of an inland sea, and pierced by the four wide, beautiful, and commodious estuaries of Christchurch, Lymington, Beaulieu, and Southampton Water, its heaths, pools, wastes, thickets and bogs, studded and interlaced with good ground, producing deep and ancients woods, made it a natural and unrivalled sanctuary for game.

The charge against the Conqueror of "wasting" this district appears in its most violent form in the pages of Lingard. "Though the king possessed sixty-eight forests, besides parks and chases, in different parts of England, he was not satisfied, but for the occasional accommodation of

[1] Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, Vol. iv. p. 609

his court, afforested an extensive tract of country lying between Winchester and the sea-coast. The inhabitants were expelled; the cottages and churches were burnt; and more than thirty square miles of a rich and populous district were withdrawn from cultivation and converted into a wilderness, to afford sufficient range for the deer, and ample space for the royal diversion." "Many populous towns and villages and thirty-six parish churches," is the more circumstantial estimate of others. Voltaire first questioned this tradition on grounds of general historical criticism. Cobbett easily detected its improbability, from a mere examination of the *soil* of the forest. It could never have been a "rich and populous district" simply because, for the greater part, the soil is among the poorest in the south of England. Thirty thousand acres were in 1849 reported unfit either for agriculture, the growth of trees, or pasturage. The test of figures also throws a doubt on the destruction of the villages. In the original area of the forest there still remain eleven parish churches on sites where churches were in existence before the time of the Conqueror. "If he destroyed thirty-six parish churches, what a populous country this must have been!" writes Cobbett. "There must have been forty-seven parish churches; so that there was over this whole district, one parish church to every four-and-three-quarter square miles."

The modern inference from these criticisms goes to the extreme of considering, that in making the forest, William confined himself to enforcing the forest law within its boundaries, thereby reserving the exclusive right of sporting for himself, while "men retained possession of their lands, their woods, mills, or other property, just as before, save for the stringent regulations of the forest law." [1]

Even so the interference with liberty and property, due to this extraordinary Norman provision for the amusement of the monarch is almost incredible to modern ideas.

"Forest law" made of the area to which it might at any moment be applied, a kind of "proclaimed district," where the law of the land at once ceased to run, and the rights of property only existed under conditions which were *mainly*, but not entirely, directed to the preservation of game. Its excuse was that it was a convenient method of placing wild

[1] *Arboriculture of the New Forest*, by the Hon. G. Lascelles, Deputy Surveyor, New Forest.

districts, infested by outlaws, under the strong government of the king, in place of the timid "presentments" of frightened villagers, and that it formed a reserve of men and munitions of war for the sovereign. The assize of the forest of 1184 by Henry II. gives a good notion of the working of these laws in the New Forest, and a clue to the survivals which are still there found. No one might sell or give anything from his own wood, if within the forest, which would destroy it: only firewood (*estoveria*) was to be taken. The result was that no large timber could be felled, and this therefore ceased to be private property within the Crown forests. The king's foresters were to be answerable if this wood was destroyed. No one was to *agist* (turn out) his cattle before the king "agisted" his. The king could agist his fifteen days before Michaelmas, and closed the woods fifteen days after Michaelmas. No spring grazing was allowed, so saplings and seedlings had a chance to grow. Open spaces were to be cut where deer could be shot at, like the "rides" in our pheasant covers. No tanner or bleacher of skins was to live in a forest, and "no receivers or thieves."

But the rigour of forest law was mitigated in the days of Henry III., the whole of whose charter of the forests is framed against the annoyance which the inhabitants had felt from the severity of the former laws. It provided that every free man should be allowed to "agist" his own wood in a forest when he pleased, and to have his own eyries of hawks, sparrow-hawks, falcons, eagles and herons. It granted permission to drive pigs and cattle through the forest, and let them spend a night on the king's land, with other privileges, which were probably the origin of many "forest rights" now claimed in the district. Are we then to conclude that the hardships suffered by the inhabitants of the "Ytene," the Saxon name of the New Forest, were limited to such as were incidental to the enforcement of forest laws? Such a consoling answer can scarcely be given. In spite of the inaccuracies of the form in which it has come down to us, the tradition of the wasting of this particular forest and the confiscation of land[1] are too unanimous to be disregarded.

[1] Freeman quotes an instance of confiscation from *Domesday*. "The sons of Godric Ralf hold under the King at Minstrad. Their father had three hides and a half of land. Now his sons have only half a hide. The rest of the ground is in the forest."

In the Forest near Lyndhurst.

The "stiffness" and cruelty of such a course are too much in keeping with the character of the king, who turned into a desert the whole district between the Humber and the Tees. The forest was perfectly suited by site and soil for William's purpose, and it is difficult to doubt that in its afforestation hardships were inflicted, which were remembered long after the general hatred of the Normans had died away.

But it must not be forgotten that though the rigours of the forest laws as a means of preserving game relaxed, the protection given by them to the woods was never withdrawn, and it is to them that we owe the preservation of the ancient timber until the present day. When laxly administered, as in the days of Charles I. and the Commonwealth, the woods have been invariably destroyed; when enforced, as by James I. and later in the days of William III. the trees have increased, and descended to us as one of the finest national inheritances. The present management of the forest, under an act passed in 1877, is based on the principle that all, except some 20,000 acres, inclosed since the year 1700, shall remain open and wild. But in this wild area forest law still runs, and protects the timber from waste and robbery.

In the Verderers' Hall at Lyndhurst the survivals of forest law and forest customs appear by the dumb witness of fixed engines of justice as primitive as the oaks of Brockenhurst. One end of the bare old chamber is fitted up as a court, in which offenders against the custom of the forest, wood and fern stealers, or those who have transgressed the limits within which cattle may be kept, or other liberties of the forest, are presented by the "agisters," who play the part of the knights from the hundreds, and townsmen from the township, who "presented" criminals in the shire moots. "Presented," the offender certainly is; for he is exposed to the public view in the most primitive dock existing in England. The prisoner sits on a kind of perch, to which he climbs by a step. Behind this is a square back with cross-pieces of black oak, with the rough axe marks still showing, and immediately in front, beyond the narrow interval of the clerk's table is the full bench of verderers. Assuming, as is probable, that this is a copy of the most ancient arrangement of such courts, we can imagine how some trembling wretch, with the

The Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

prospect of maiming or blinding before him, must have felt before the scowl of the forest rangers of Norman or Angevin kings, on this seat of justice over against him. Besides the rude accommodation for judges and prisoners, the court contains a recess filled with books on forest law which, by that grace of congruity which seems inseparable from everything in this strangely perfect region, are screened by the most appropriate curtain that could be devised, the skin of a red deer. The walls are decorated by horns of deer, red and fallow. Whatever the history of the great stirrup, which hangs upon the wall, and is said to have belonged to William Rufus, it is a notable relic, and thoroughly in place in this hall of woodland justice. It is clearly the stirrup in which the thickly-mailed feet of the days of plate armour, with their broad iron toes were thrust, thick enough and broad enough to give "support" for the most ponderous horseman in his coat of steel; and so wide, that the legend that all dogs which could not be passed through it were considered possible enemies to game, and therefore maimed does not seem improbable, except in regard to dates.

Lyndhurst is by size and position the true capital of the forest. There stands the ancient Queen's House, to which the Verderers' Hall is attached, and in which the Deputy-Surveyor of the Forest has his residence, and on the high mound of natural verdure in the centre of the town, the soaring spire of its church shoots up, and dominates the immense tract of woodland, of which it forms the natural centre.

The town has no mean outskirts, or squalid surroundings. The woodlands run up to its old houses like a sea; and the parks surrounding the fine mansions, which fringe the forest capital, are mere incidents in its scenery, lost and absorbed in the wild woods around them. Cuffnalls Park, a grassy hill clothed with oaks and beeches, lies just outside the town, and leads the eye by an easy transition, from the formal gardens of the Lyndhurst houses, to the uncovenanted graces of the natural forest. Beyond the park the road divides to Burley and Christchurch on the left, to Ringwood on the right, and at the parting of the ways, the forest at once and without reserve flings itself across the field of sight. Thence to Mark Ash, the most renowned of all the ancient woods, the way lies through scenes in an ascending scale of beauty which mark this as the first path to be trodden by the pilgrim and stranger.

The understanding needs time to eddy round the crowding forms that claim its homage. It is the Eleusinian Way, along which the genius of the forest seems to lead the neophyte gently by the hand, saying, "Look on this, and that, and that, first grasp the lesser, then the greater mysteries, until with eyes and understanding opened you may enter and enjoy the earthly paradise of perfect beauty which lies beyond."

Thus the mind keeps its sense of proportion, and the excitement and

Cottage at Lyndhurst.

stimulus of this appeal to the sense of admiration is maintained, as the appetite grows with the beauty which feeds it. Slow and lingering should be the tread, silent and solitary the traveller, in a first journey to the high places of the forest, assured that, though the first steps are through the scenes of laughing rustic prettiness, by lawns and groves, the playgrounds of the forest children, and pastures of the forest cattle, ground that in other times would have been sacred to Faunus and Pan, and all their merry crew, he will at last pass beyond the ways of men, and find himself face to face with masterpieces of Nature's hand, before which he must stand silent and amazed.

From Cuffnalls Park two winding roads lead up the steep ascent on either hand. In the space between, sloping gently upwards towards the light is neither field nor fence, but against the sky-line is ranged a crescent of oaks and beeches, fronted by most ancient thorns. Three shapes, three colours distinguish tree from tree, through their centre a green glade winds up into the wood, and from their feet a smooth lawn of turf flows gently down into the point at which the roads divide, watched on either hand by a sentinel oak.

"Swan Green" is the name of this beautiful lawn. Beyond its slope lies the village of Emery Down, after which the signs and sounds of human habitation disappear with a suddenness almost startling. The road lies through rolling tracts of the most wild and ancient forest land. Right and left the slopes are clothed with trees in the prime and vigour of their age. Some few are oaks; but the beech is the indigenous, or perhaps the growing tree of this stately tract of forest, and from this point onwards the mind is incessantly invited to consider the manifold beauties of form which even one species of forest tree presents.

There seems no limit to the hall of columns which fades away into dim distance in the wood, though the space between the stem is clear and open. The gray trunks shoot straight upwards to the sky each with its smooth surrounding lawn. The tallest beeches which spring on the slope of the hill-sides seem to draw back with a certain reticence from the broad pathways of the glades, drooping their branches downward and wrapping them round their feet with a dainty and almost feminine dignity and reserve. Others grow like oaks, flinging their branches abroad in wild disordered tangles.

There are those among them which have already passed their prime, and yet scarcely show the symptoms of decay. In many beeches the first years of decline add dignity to their forms. The tree dies from the top; but at first this appears only by a cessation of upward growth. The branches at the summit thicken, cluster, and multiply, like the antlers on an old stag's horns, giving to the whole massive and weighty proportions in strange contrast to the usual graceful and feathery outlines of its race. In others, further advanced in the stages of decay, the vigour of the lower branches so arrests the eye, that it scarcely travels beyond the mass of leafage, though above and from the centre of the

healthy boughs an upright growth of bare gray limbs rises grimly naked and alone.

Some two miles from Lyndhurst the hush of the forest begins. If the wind is still, and the trees motionless, there is a silence which can be felt. In winter or early spring, before the summer migrants have arrived, or the hum of insects has begun to stir the air, the sense of hearing is not excited by any form of sound. There are neither men nor children

A Dead Giant. Mark Ash.

in this part of the wood, the cattle are away on distant lawns, the deer are hidden in the thick inclosures, and the great birds which haunt the forest are away, in the still grander and more solemn precincts of the most ancient woods. Beyond Emery Down the high wood gives place to a rolling natural park, clothed with heather, cotton grass, and gray whortle bushes, and studded with single trees, or small groups, in pairs and triplets, of perfect form. Here is seen that phase of beauty so often desired and seldom found, *distance* in the forest, bounded only by

a far-off misty screen of luxuriant wood. Beyond this open park, the imagination is kept in constant excitement and expectation by the increasing size and beauty of the trees. Each group seems to surpass the last, and to mark the ultimate limits of grace and size, until something even grander and more stately takes the pride of place. Their splendour dominates the mind to the exclusion of all other subjects of thought. You become a connoisseur not only in their general beauty but in its particular forms. You analyse them into types, grades, and permanent varieties, and no longer compare them promiscuously, but form standards for the different classes. Some of the finest ancient beeches have apparently been pollarded, and so far from this proving a disfigurement in their ripe maturity, it gives them a variety of form and a spread of limb, which makes a fine contrast with the towering domes which top the single stems of the natural tree. Many of the pollards seem to come late into leaf, and the effect is particularly fine when in spring their ruddy buds surround some other forest giant in the full glory of early growth.

On the left side of the road, some two and a half miles beyond Emery Down, there is such a group of immense spreading pollards, above which towers the rounded head of an unshrouded tree, capped with a cloud of vivid green floating leaf-buds.

Opposite the beech circle, a low line of alders gives promise of a swamp, and the ground descends into a "bottom"; not the squashy river of grass usually known by that name in the Surrey coombes, but a flat swampy valley of gray and lichen-covered heather and cotton-grass, scored and intersected by the manifold windings of a slow, dark stream, curling round masses of cattle-gnawed and ivy-strangled alders and sallows, heaped and encumbered with soft mounds of black and gray mud, studded with little bulbous oak stems, stunted and decayed, and shattered by the lightning of the thunder clouds which follow the water. The struggle for life against water and lightning must also be made heavier by the force of the wind in this valley of desolation, for even the tough alders had been uprooted by the gales, and lay prostrate in the marsh, with cavernous hollows beneath their roots haunted by water-rats and tiny trout. In the most stagnant parts white limbs of drowned oaks raise their skeleton arms above the marsh,

and the ragged ponies which graze round the margin, test carefully at each step the ground in which so many of their companions have sunk and perished when weak with winter and famine.

The colouring of this swampy hollow is in complete contrast to the brilliant tints of the sound lawns and high woods. It has only two tones, gray and black. Yet even there the finishing touch of nature completes the picture. The black stream and alder clumps are fringed and studded with golden marsh marigolds, and over the gray mud creeps an exquisite little plant with five-lobed leaves and gray starry flowers like silver stonecrop. A low ridge of better soil divides this slow rivulet of the swamp from the bright waters of a typical New Forest stream, the Lymington river. On its banks the solemn beeches once more cluster, and the hurrying stream goes dancing through the wood golden clear with topaz lights, past the lines of columned trees, slipping from pool to pool with little impatient rushes, resting a moment in the deeper pools, then climbing the pebble beds which bar them in, and hurrying down to the sea, at Lymington Haven.

This river, like that at Beaulieu, belongs wholly to the forest. Here it is a mere brook, with exquisitely rounded banks of turf and moss, as if the wood fairies who put the acorn and beech nuts to bed for the winter had tucked in the coverlet on either side and then embroidered it with flowers. The pools are full of enormous "boatmen" which lurk under the banks and dart out at every leaf, insect or stick which comes floating down the stream. Each morsel is seized, pulled about and examined by the creatures, like a company of custom-house officers at a port, and as a steady rain of *débris* from the trees descends upon the stream throughout the day they are kept busy from dawn till dusk. Even so near its source this stream sometimes overflows its banks. In one spot the whole of the surface roots of a beech have been pared clear of soil as if by a trowel. It is not a large tree, but the spread of root is fifteen paces across.

West of the river the ancient trees once more close in towards the road, and beyond them on either side are younger woods planted by the Crown. Very few young trees appear in this part of the old forest, but on the right hand of the path is a beautiful example of tree protecting tree from the destroying cattle. A most ancient crab-tree, hoary with

lichen and green with ivy, has thrown its protecting arms round the stem of a fine young oak. The smooth clean stem now shoots up clear of the old crabtree, whose delicate pink blossom mixed with the black ivy berries, shows that it is vigorous still in spite of its double burden of carrying the ivy and caring for the oak.

An example of the astonishing detail and completeness of the natural beauties of the forest, beauty presented on a scale so large, that the absence of detail and ornament might well pass unobserved, may be seen round the stem of every great tree that fronts the road. Take for instance the base of the beech column which stands opposite to the grass track that leads to the left to the charcoal burner's hut below Mark Ash. It is the base of a compound column, thicker than the piers of Durham Cathedral, with seven projecting pilasters. The bark is like gray frosted silver, crusted in parts with a scale ornament of lichen, and in the interstices between the pillars with short golden-brown moss. The rounded niches which encircle its base are laid out as natural gardens; which in April of the present year were planted and arranged as follows. In one a violet bed, covered with blossoms which touched the bark of the trunk. In the next a briar-rose, a foot high in young leaf. In the third three curling fronds of bracken fern. In the fourth a moss-grown billet of sere wood, and a pile of last year's beech mast. In the fifth a young woodbine, which had slipped into the inmost crevice between the sheltering pilasters, and was already adorned with little whorls of green leaves. In the sixth a wood sorrel, with trefoils of exquisite green-like chrysoprase, and in the seventh niche four seedling hollies, a tiny rowan tree, and a seedling beech as high as a pencil. The whole was encircled by a close carpet of moss turf, and the *débris* of leaves. The eye sees these minor beauties in series and succession; but no mere catalogue can convey an adequate idea of the delight and satisfaction afforded to the mind by this prodigal abundance of natural ornament.

The cries of the woodland birds, which hitherto had hardly broken the silence of the forest, showed that the attractions of cover, food, and water must be combined in a measure not yet encountered in the adjacent glades. The bright sun poured between the green leaves and reached the dark hollows among the pines below, and the wood rang with the cries of the larger and rarer birds which have here their haunt. The hooting and

yelping of the owls, though it was noon-day, was almost like the intermittent cry of hounds that have strayed from the pack, and are hunting some solitary deer. The laughing of the woodpecker, the harsh and angry screams of the jays, the crow of the cock pheasant, and the cuckoo's call, showed that animal life, hitherto so scarce in this wealth of arboreal growth was here abundant and in evidence. The only trace of man's presence was the rudest and most primitive dwelling known to civilized

Charcoal Burner's Hut, Bolderwood.

life. In the centre of a clearing, surrounded on three sides by a towering ring of monster beeches, was a deserted charcoal burner's hut, with the "burning circle" in front of the door. Except for the setting of good English trees it might pass for part of the kraal of some race of woodland dwarfs, with its "zeriba" in front. The last is a large circle of brushwood, supported by posts and rails of rough oak-poles. Within was a flooring of black ashes, neatly raked into a raised ring at a few feet from the circumference.

The hut looks like a white ants' hill covered with scales of turf turned grass inwards, with a kind of mushroom cup on the apex. The only sign that the dwelling was not constructed by savages is the square door and porch, hewn of roughly squared oak. A glimpse of the interior shows that the framework is a cope of strong oak poles, and the only furniture a couple of sacks of dry beech leaves, a low wooden bench, and one or two iron pots. A similar hut in Gritnam wood is inhabited throughout the year by an adder-hunter. He does not even indulge in the luxury of a beech leaf mattress or a wooden door ; but lives in health and comfort with a low oak bench for his bed, and a faggot of heather for curtain and door.

A narrow glen and stream, with an ascent bare of trees forms a kind of precinct, before the last and inmost circle of the wood, where the neophyte may pause, and see revealed before him, the final and crowning secret of the forest. The voices of Dodona's doves echo softly throbbing from the grove, and invite him "to touch, to see, to enter" and be from henceforth one of the initiated. On either side the enormous beeches rise, some tossing their branches like the arms of Blake's angels, sweeping skyward with uplifted hands, others with huge limbs flung supine on the turf, others like slender pillars from which spring fretted vaults and arches, trees male and female, trees of architecture, and trees of life, rising in measured order and gradual succession on the sides of a theatre of woodland turf. Where the solemn aisles diverge they are walled with holly, roofed with the green of the beech, and floored with flesh colour and gold, as the broken lights glitter on the carpet of moss and wind-sown leaves. Half of a clustered beech had fallen in one shock to the ground, smashing into ruin the tall hollies below it, and scattering their broken limbs in a yet wider circle of destruction. The scent of beech and holly from the crushed and broken fragments overpowered all the odours of the forest. Deer had been browsing on the fallen boughs, and three fallow bucks sprang up from behind the ruin and rushed through the hollies beyond. Nine fallen limbs, each a tree itself in size and proportions, lay spread upon the ground like the fingers of a fan. The coating of moss with which it was completely covered made it easy to walk up over the limbs to the point of fracture and thence look down into the forest. In front lay beds of young holly glittering in the sun, the

ground between them covered with the vivid green of wood-sorrel Beyond, and around, on every side the towering forms of the gigantic trees stand clear, each behind each in ordered ranks without movement or sound in the still air, except for the cooing of the ring-doves and the screams of the wood-owls moving in the forest. It is a temple without walls, with a thousand pillars and a thousand gates, aisles innumerable and arches multiplex, so lofty, so light, so ancient and so fair that it seems the work not of natural growth but of some enchantment, which has raised it in the forest far from the home of man, unpeopled, untrodden and alone.

Such is the ancient wood of Mark Ash, in itself, its setting and surroundings. It may be doubted whether elsewhere in England is to be found another to excel it or equal it in the completeness of its beauty, and in the strange perfection of the growth, not only of its trees, but of its turf, its flowers and its lawns, to which the will of man has not contributed the laying of a sod or the setting of a daisy.

CHAPTER II

THE CENTRAL FOREST (*continued*)

The forest heaths—Beaulieu and Ober Heath contrasted—Fleming's thorns—Matley Heath and Bog—Flight of the woodcocks at dusk up Matley Passage—Denny Bog by twilight—Alum Green and the Roman Arch—The Knightwood oak—Heronry in Vinney Ridge—Young herons; buzzards; the adder-hunter—Brockenhurst—Night in the forest.

THE sense of freedom and limitless distance which always accompanies a forest walk is never more complete than when the traveller emerges from roaming in the great woods or thick plantations and finds himself on one of the wide heaths which stretch for miles beside the woodlands, and are themselves surrounded by distant lines of forest beyond which lie heaths, and yet more forest far away down to the shores of the Solent. Beaulieu Heath is perhaps the finest of the open stretches of forest scenery. There is something so new, fresh and exhilarating in the sudden presentation of this apparently unlimited stretch of high open level ground, swept by the volume of the over-sea wind that comes rolling up from the Channel, which reacts on the mind with a kind of intoxication of space and air. Miles of whispering pines are the background to the heath: beyond all is open, level and free, the ground falling imperceptibly till the near horizon is nothing but a level line of heather, below which the intersecting waters of the Solent are lost to sight, though the blue hills of the Isle of Wight rise like the background of a panorama, far beyond the invisible strait which lies between. There are those who prefer the forest heaths even to the forest woods. Doubtless each gains by contrast, the more so that the change from the high woods to the sweeping moorland, is often as sudden as the shifting of a scene upon the stage.

Take for instance the wide stretch of Ober Heath, which fringes the

great plantations of Rhinefield Walk, and runs almost down to Brockenhurst from the modern castle which has been built upon the site of the keeper's lodge at Rhinefield. The upper portion of the heath is like a scene in the Surrey pine districts, studded with self-sown Scotch fir, and clothed with gorse bushes, rough heather, and a tiny dwarf willow, which creeps upon the ground like ivy, but otherwise is a perfect willow bush, studded in spring with tiny satin globes, like the "palms" of the common osier, but no larger than shot or tare-seed. Far away across the dark purple heather and golden gorse, the quick stream of Ober-water runs through a flat green lawn to join the Brockenhurst river just above New Park, with the hill of Brockenhurst Manor breaking the sky-line to the right. The left side of the heath is fringed by heavy forest; but in this case the transition from heath to wood is broken by a wide scrub of dwarf thorns, round as beehives, matted with heather, and knots and beards of lichen. Some hundred acres must be covered by "Fleming's thorns," as this dense thicket is called. Those who have seen both, compare it to the mimosa scrub of the African plains. Like the mimosa it is a favourite haunt of game; and the wild deer love to lie in its secluded and impenetrable jungle.

No fence or boundary marks the transition from heath to forest. The river slips from the common, between clumps of holly and single waving birches, winds down a glade, and in a few yards is lost to sight among masses of oak, alder, ash, and pines. Looking backwards towards the sunset along this borderland, the rugged outlines of the gorse and fir, and the broken and wind-swept hollies and thorns which fringe the full fed forest, give to the scene an air of wildness and confusion in striking contrast to the serene tranquillity which reigns within the solemn precints of the woods. Ober Heath is an example of the forest moor inclosed by wooded hills. On Matley Heath, south of Lyndhurst, the converse may be seen; a barren heather-clad hill rising steadily from low wooded ground on either side, and then descending in a long and gentle slope to an immense expanse of flat and barren moor. This wild and desolate tract is perhaps the largest unbroken stretch of heather and infertility in the whole forest. Under the names of Matley Heath, Black Down, Yew-tree Heath, and Denny Bog, it stretches east of Lyndhurst in a straight line of five miles to the Beaulieu river. Cobbett, who rode across it after having missed

his way, and hated heaths because they would not grow his pet swede turnips, calls it "about six miles of heath even worse than Bagshot Heath ; as barren as it is possible for land to be." From Lyndhurst the road gradually ascends, the soil all the way growing thinner and poorer, until the bare gravel shows in white patches and plains among the starved heather. Yet on the right, and at no great distance are thick woods of the finest timber in England, and even on the crest of the hill, a fine rounded wood of beech and oak, Matley Wood, stands up like a fertile island, with a sea of heather and bog round it. To the left lies the great stretch of Matley Bog, and to the right a narrow strip of hard sand where the road creeps round the head of the morass. Here is a picture which, but for the road and bridge cannot have changed for a thousand years. A stream flows down from a wide valley in the thick woods, and spreads itself among green marshes, sedge, and alder copses, at the top of the bog, whose level and impassable plain loses itself in the black heath which stretches far beyond the railway into the southern forest. At dusk, the woodcocks, which rest in the forest, come flying up from the bog to the woods. On the last day of April of the present year, at a quarter before eight, the woodcocks were already on the wing. Night was settling down on the heath, but the horizon was still light above the hill, and tall clouds were passing across the west. A sound came from the bog, like the twittering of swallows on the wing, mixed with low croaking cries. Then a bird with steady flight like that of a curlew on the mud-flats came up out of the dusk, and crossed the road, uttering its curious call at regular intervals, and making straight for the head of the woodland glen. This was followed by a pair, which, after crossing the road flew tilting at one another, and turning and twisting in the air all round the semi-circle of lofty trees which crown the hollow in the woods. Bird after bird then flew up from the bog, until the forest glen was full of their dusky forms twisting and twining, like swallows or fern owls, against the evening sky.

Next day a young woodcock was brought into Lyndhurst ; it had been caught in the wood close to the Lyndhurst race-course, the rest of the brood were seen hiding close by, with their heads laid upon the ground and bodies motionless like young plover, while the parent bird flew round, and endeavoured to decoy the lad who found them

Matley Passage and Matley Bog.

from the spot. This young bird was a most beautiful creature, no longer covered with down, but fully fledged to all appearance, and adorned with the beautiful brown mottling which makes the woodcock's plumage one of the most perfect pieces of tone-ornament in nature. As the night creeps on, blurring every minor feature of the scene, and leaving only the faint gleam of waters and the black forms of the alder clumps from distance to distance in the bog, the cry of the wild-fowl, echoed by the dark wall of forest at the back, shows that all the natives of the marsh are awake and moving. The croak of the woodcocks, the calling and screaming of the plovers, the bleating of the snipe, and the harsh barking of the herons, winging their way from Vinney Ridge to the Beaulieu river, fill the air with sound, though the creatures themselves are invisible; while from the forest the yelping and screeching of the owls, the incessant drone of the "churr worms," and the whirr of the great wood-beetles, answers the calls from the open moor. At such times the stranger will do well to seek the road and return across the heath; for once entangled in the great woods which lie southward of the marsh, he may well be lost till morning. In the angle between this mass of forest and the railway, lies Denny Bog, a more distant and even more picturesque portion of this irreclaimable waste. The words bog, marsh and swamp are often used indifferently. Properly understood they apply to widely different conditions.

A bog is a portion of ground lying in soak. In the forest they are found of all sizes, from the area of a dining-room table to that of Hyde Park. The rim of the bog is hard enough to prevent the escape of the water except by gradual soakage, and thus the service is level. Yet the beauty of the bogs is known and appreciated by every "forester," though they are a fruitful source of disaster to riders who do not know how they often lurk under the very shadow of the timber at the edge of the sound land of the woods. There is a tiny bog on the edge of Gritnam Wood which may serve as an example. On the verge of the common which lies below the wood is a pretty little circle of golden moss, with patches of green grass, and pools of black water no larger than a man's hand. Towards the centre the colouring is as brilliant as that of sea-weeds and sea-anemones seen in sunlit water. The mosses grow into spongy pillows, with exquisite feathery fronds. Some

of this moss is rose-pink ; other kinds brilliant green, or tawny brown, and from the whole comes a scent like that of fern roots. A man may walk across in safety, but a horse breaks through the spongy surface, and nearly always falls, throwing its rider in the process, for the sucking mosses prevent any effort at recovering its footing after the first stumble.

Herons, like the monks of old, seem always to choose a picturesque site for their home. Their home in the wooded hills of Wytham, looking far far across the flats of the upper Thames valley, or in the tall pines of Woolmer Forest, near the Deer's Hut common, in the steep cliffs of the Findhorn river, and last, but not least beautiful, the heronry in the thick plantation at the head of the Penn Ponds in Richmond Park, where the London herons build almost unknown to the thousands of visitors who skate upon the lakes in winter, or ride and drive past them in summer, are each the chosen spots in their own beautiful vicinity. The heronry on Vinney Ridge, about four miles from Lyndhurst, is no exception to the rule, and the path to it leads through some of the finest woodland scenery. Part lies along an ancient Roman road, which runs over the summit of Lyndhurst Hill.

From this the view ranges far to south, west, and east, while at its foot lies Alum Green, perhaps the largest and most beautiful of all the forest lawns. It is a kind of natural "savannah" in the woods. The extent of sound turf covers many acres, dotted with park-like groups of trees, surrounded on all sides with a ring of ancient timber on sloping banks. It is the favourite resort of all the ponies and cattle in this part of the Forest. The ancient path joins the main road to Christchurch, near the Lymington stream, about a mile below the bridge which crosses it on the way to Mark Ash. Here also is a bridge, of a single arch of brick. The stream comes hurrying down to this through the open forest. Three tributaries have already swelled its waters between this and the upper crossing-place, and river and banks alike are deeper and even lovelier than before. The broken banks are planted, wreathed, and fringed by every kind of forest flower, shrub, and fern, of the largest and most luxuriant growth. Anemones, cuckoo-flowers, violets, king-cups, young bracken, and hard-fern, woodbine and wild rose, heart's-tongue, and moss like lengths of velvet cover the banks, the beech-boughs arch the stream, and on each side the open wood extends to the

utmost limit of sight. The otters make this part of the river their summer home. Two young ones were recently dug out from the earth a short way below the "Gate House," which stands near the bridge, and during the day they frequently lie up, either in the dry forest near, or under the roots of a big tree by the banks. The habits of the New Forest otters on this stream seem very well known to those who are interested either in hunting or observing them. They travel a long way down the river at night, perhaps past Brockenhurst and as far as Boldre, or even below to near Lymington. They then hunt the stream upwards in the early morning until they reach the narrow waters, where they stay during the day. The pack of otter-hounds, which generally visits the forest in the early summer, usually meet at Brockenhurst or some other point down stream and pick up the fresh "drag" of the otters, which have returned up stream in the early hours of the morning. Hunted deer also make for the water at this point, and endeavour to throw off the pack before seeking refuge in the thick recesses of Knightwood and Vinney Ridge. A fallow buck finds the dimensions of the stream quite adequate for the temporary destruction of scent. Slipping down some tributary brooklet it will pick its way down to a pool, and then, gently sinking, until nothing but head and horns remain above water, lies as motionless as a squatted hare listening to the shouts, talking, casting, and excitement on either bank, until refreshed and invigorated it springs once more to the bank and leads its pursuers another circle through the woods and bogs of the forest.

North of the road, a little beyond the "Roman Arch," as tradition calls this bridge, is the inclosure of Knightwood. This large wood, though in part replanted in 1867, contains many remnants of ancient forest embedded in the new timber, among other the celebrated Knightwood Oak. Thus it shows in juxtaposition both the artificial and natural modes of reproducing forest. On the edges of the wood are close plantations of Scotch fir, in formal rows, which shelter and direct the upward growth of the young oaks between. In the centre, where old trees have died and been removed, or have in past time cleared a space which their present height leaves free to light and air, young oaks, birches, and beeches are growing in irregular masses and of all heights and sizes. Among this confused multitude is the great Knightwood Oak.

Knightwood Oak, Mark Ash.

This forest king stands in a smooth round lawn; all other trees keeping their distance beyond the outermost circle of its branches. The main trunk of the oak rises like a smooth round Norman pillar, and at no great height breaks into eight limbs which radiate from it like the sticks of a fan, in very straight and regular lines. The extremities of these show signs of decay, but the tree seems as firm as ever. Its rigidity is such that in a heavy gale, though the tops of the branches move, the mass of the tree seems as stiff as if cast in iron. The limbs, though untouched by decay, are coated nearly to the summit by thick green moss, and the effect of this symmetrical mass of timber springing from a trunk of such magnitude—its girth is 19½ feet—is beyond description dignified and imposing. The tallest beeches in the forest are probably those in which the herons build in the Vinney Ridge inclosure, on the opposite side of the Christ Church Road from Knightwood. The wood lies on the top of a fine saddle-back hill, covered with trees of every kind, except elm, and of all ages, from old ivy-bound oaks to immense beeches and thorn-bushes wreathed with woodbine. There is a far greater extent of open turf here than in most "inclosures," and when the fences are removed in 1899, which is the date fixed for its disenclosure, it will take its place as a natural part of the ancient forest.

The beeches in which the herons build are so lofty as to lift their summits above the natural angle of sight, even as the head is usually carried in the forest; if it were not for the glimpses of the great birds silently launching themselves from the tree-tops before their disturber has approached the nest, the existence of the colony would not be suspected. It was the flight of a single heron slipping noiselessly from the nest, and soaring back in a wide circle to watch over the brood, that first indicated to the present writer that he was in the heronry. Even then the height of the trees, their distance apart, and the thickness of the foliage at the top made the discovery of the nest no easy task, had not the clattering noise made by the young indicated their whereabouts. The presence of birds of prey, though usually screened from sight by the thickness of the forest, was well illustrated by an incident which took place after the momentary flight of the old herons. A sparrow-hawk dashed up through the wood, and poising itself above the

The Heronry at Vinney Ridge.

trees, flew from nest to nest, looking down into them from a height of a few feet, and apparently expecting to find a brood small enough for one to be carried off before the old birds returned. The hawk's visit only lasted for a minute, for at that moment five old herons came sweeping over the wood, and remained soaring in hurried and anxious flight far above the tops of the loftiest trees. When we retired to some distance and stood still by a timber stack, bird after bird pitched on the trees, and after one or two subdued croaks of greeting, flapped down into the nest. The eyries appear absolutely inaccessible, built, as they are, at heights of from seventy to ninety feet from the ground on trees which rise two-thirds of that height without a single branch. Yet they are climbed, otherwise the inquiry as to whether you "could do with some young herons"—or young "cranes," for both names are used in the forest—would not be addressed to those who are known to have a taste for keeping odd pets so often as it is.

There are a few ancient inhabitants who still know the favourite nesting places, not only of the herons, but of rarer birds, such as the common and honey-buzzard. The forest is said to be the last breeding place of the honey-buzzard left in England, and there is no reason, in the present condition of the woodlands, why either of these birds should forsake the district, except in the prices offered for their eggs by "oologists." The keepers protect a nest when found, and as the honey-buzzard does not lay till summer is well advanced, there is more chance of its nest escaping observation than for those of the early-building birds.

The strangest survival of any industry connected with the taking of wild animals in the forest is that of the "Adder-hunter," probably the very last representative in England of a race who for upwards of two centuries have contributed their strange nostrum of adder's fat to the pharmacopœias of central and western Europe. The last of the Adder-hunters is a strikingly handsome man, probably past his sixtieth year, short, with curling beard and hair, and equipped in what is probably a unique costume for his peculiar trade. Thick boots and gaiters protect him from the chance of a bite from the snakes. He is slung all over with bags of sacking, his pockets are stuffed with tins and boxes, and from his chest hangs a pair of long steel forceps. In his hand he carries a light

stick with a ferrule, into which when he rouses a snake he puts in a short forked piece of hazel wood, and, darting it forward with unerring

The Adder-Catcher.

aim, pins the adder to the ground. Stooping down he picks it up lightly with the forceps, and after holding the writhing creature up for a moment, in which he looks like a rustic Æsculapius, he transfers it to his

sack. Mr. Mills, or "Brusher," as he is known among his friends, is a well-known and popular character in the forest, and his services in keeping down the number of adders are considerable. From March to September he ranges the forest, and his largest "bag" was 160 adders in a month. These he boils down, and prepares from their flesh the "adder's fat," which he sells. Its virtues have been known for so many centuries, and the favour with which extremely penetrating unguents, such as lanoline, made from the fat of sheep's wool, are now regarded, justifies the reputation it enjoys. The belief that it is a remedy for the bite of the snake itself may rest on slender grounds. But for the odd list of accidents given by the old man—"sprains, black eyes, poisoning with brass, bites by rats and horses, rheumatic joints, and sore feet in men and dogs," it is admitted by the general consent of the forest to be a sovereign balm. In winter the Adder-hunter's occupation is gone, but he has other modes of making a livelihood, and his lodging throughout the year is in the woods, in the snug interior of a charcoal-burner's hut.

Brockenhurst, unlike Lyndhurst, which, with all its picturesque features, bears itself like a little town, is a true village, imbedded in the forest. Here the ground is stiff clayey loam, suitable for the growth of oaks, and consequently for corn and arable land. The square fields, with hedgerows, which fringe the village give an uneasy sense of limit and confinement after the free and open woodlands. But the cultivated land is a mere patch, lost to sight and memory in a few minutes' walk from the village. The church stands apart on a little hill, a perfect forest shrine, ringed by a double circle of oaks, between which lie the graves, sprinkled with primroses that have crept out from the wood, and spread their flowers shyly on the churchyard turf. Like the new church of Lyndhurst, the building stands upon a green mount. A giant yew, sound and vigorous, with a solid stem eighteen feet in girth, overshadows the red-brick tower, and reaches halfway up the spire. In front of this tree stand the dead fragments of an oak. The age of this ruin of a tree is almost beyond conjecture, but its position gives some clue to its date. Part of one branch survives. This limb, which appears to be some six feet in diameter, must have passed across the space on which the greater part of the yew now stands, at a height of thirteen feet from the ground. Thus when the ancient

Brockenhurst Church.

yew was a mere shrub, not so high as the great limb of the oak, the latter must have attained its full dimensions; for the yew is a tree of perfect growth, straight, upright, and unmarred by crowding or shade, which must have been the case had it grown up when the oak-bough was large enough to overshadow it. The shell of the oak measures twenty-five feet

Bridge near Brockenhurst.

round; and the centuries of the growth of the yew must be the measure of the decline and fall of this primeval oak.

At dusk, when the heavy clouds descend and brood in long lines across the woods, with bars of pale white sky below, the scene between Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst is singularly wild and pleasing. The white and waning light in the west is broken by the sharp outlines of the rugged firs, and reflected in pale sheets in the swampy pools which line the river. The woods are studded with clumps of holly, whose

opaque black outline contrasts with the gnarled and twisted limbs of the ancient pollarded oaks native to this stiff and vigorous soil. As the dusk creeps on the night-sounds of the forest are more distinctly heard. The splashing of the ponies' feet as they crop the grass of the swamps, the neighing of the forest mares as they call their foals, and the distant tinkle of the cattle-bells, sound through the trees, and shadowy forms of deer canter across the rides. Voices of children, calling or crying in the deep wood, are among the startling and unexpected sounds of night in the forest. More than once the writer has left the track and hastened into the grove, only to see the fire of a gipsy camp, with the children and parents lying at the mouth of their tent, lighted and warmed by the glow of their beech-wood fire. The smell of the woods on a still night, when dew is falling, is the essence of a thousand years distilling in the soil of this virgin forest. It baffles description ; suffice it to say, as Herodotus did of Arabia Felix, "from this country comes an odour, wondrous sweet." Nor are true perfumes wanting, where wafts of the scent of sweetbriar come across the path, or an unseen bed of hyacinths fringes the road.

CHAPTER III

THE WILD DEER AND FOREST PONIES

Unique character of hunting in the "High Woods"—Survival of the wild deer—A spring meet at New Park—Rousing deer with tufters—Old Moonstone—Laying on the pack—Full cry in the forest—Number of deer killed—The forest ponies—Their importance to the Commoners—Arab blood—Their feral habits—Improvement ana maintenance of the breed—The Pony Show at Lyndhurst.

The forest was created as a hunting-ground, and such it still remains. The fox is regularly hunted, and the otter-hounds visit Brockenhurst in spring. But the beasts of the chase peculiar to the district are the *wild* red and fallow deer, which are hunted amid settings and surroundings absolutely unique in England.

Their continued existence is one instance in many of the natural survival of what is appropriate to the forest. When the deer were over-preserved by the Crown, their presence led to endless ill-will and demoralisation. From 7,000 to 8,000 head are said to have lived within and about the boundaries of the forest at the end of the last century. Such a stock was far larger than the natural resources of the ground could maintain. In the winter they were partly fed by hay grown for them at New Park. Even so they frequently starved in hard weather, and it is said that in the winter of 1787 three hundred were found dead in one walk. The reaction from this over-preservation went almost as far in the opposite direction. The "Deer Removal Act" was passed in 1851. The greater number were taken in the "toils" —high nets still kept in most deer parks—and most of the rest were shot down by sportsmen. But they have survived all efforts at their

destruction, and their increase in the thick and quiet plantations is now steadily maintained.

Towards the close of the season, late in April, a day with the New Forest deerhounds presents from meet to finish a series of pictures of sylvan sport, in the full glory of the English spring, each of which might be illustrated from the plays of Shakespeare and the old ballad poetry of England. Take for example the scene at a meet late in April of the present year, under the tall oaks at New Park. Three men, born and bred in the forest, sons of woodmen, dressed in brown velveteen, thick boots, and gaiters, were leaning against the oaks. Each wore across his shoulders long thongs of leather, with loops and swivels of steel, working examples of those mysterious ornaments of white and gold with which the Master of the Queen's Buckhounds is girded as he leads the royal procession on the Cup day at Ascot. These are the "couples," for holding the pack, until the time comes to lay them on upon the scent of the deer, which the "tufters" have driven from cover. Three or four red-scarved, black-muzzled forest gipsies strolled up and formed a group under another oak, little dark active laughing orientals, a strange contrast to the sturdy foresters. The old adder-catcher next joined the party; he had hunted the forest as he came, and flung down upon the ground from his wallet a pair of writhing snakes. The "kennels" are good customers for his adder's fat, as it is believed not only to be useful to reduce sprains and injuries in horse and hound, but also as a remedy against the adder poison should a hound be bitten in the forest. A gipsy family followed, ragged, unkempt, "happy as birds and hard as nails," as a forester described them, taking the meet on their most leisurely way to Brockenhurst. An old woman, the present patriarch of the forest gipsies, led the way, in a cloak of enormous squares of scarlet and black, which covered the basket she carried like a tent, and a poke-bonnet. Another younger woman, in a true "witches' hat" with elf locks hanging from below, and a tribe of most ragged children, sockless, shoeless, some pushing a little cart in which lay their tents, others straying and returning like little wild animals, were amusing themselves by imitating a pack of hounds in full cry. Soon the pack appeared, with huntsman and whips in coats of Lincoln green, and couples across their breasts, and though the hounds

are no longer like those which Theseus bid the forester "uncouple in the western valley,"

> "With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
> Crook-kneed and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls
> Slow in pursuit,"

they are still "matched in mouth like bells," and their greater speed and symmetry does not detract from the pleasure of listening in the forest to

> "The musical confusion
> Of hounds and echo in conjunction,"

which the hero proposed to Queen Hippolyta. A sharp-faced man "lunging" a forest pony, and one or two mounted woodmen and keepers, completed the party, until the "field" cast up rapidly, the master in Lincoln green, the rest in quiet blacks and browns. The hounds were then divided by the whips into groups, and the couples fastened, each thong being linked to a pair of hounds. Thus one man has to hold from three to six couple, and that picturesque poise of men stepping backwards with arms extended and dragging reluctant hounds which has been painter's and sculptor's subject for centuries is reproduced in perfection. One ancient and sagacious hound, by name Moonstone, was omitted from the coupling process. Satisfied that for it the honour was reserved of finding and separating the deer, it trotted alone at the heels of the huntsman's horse, with an air of sagacity and importance most edifying to behold. After "secret consults" with one or two woodmen, who had marked deers in the early morning, the huntsman led the way through thick and beautiful plantations, the coupled hounds and the field following in long procession. On every side the wood rang with the spring notes of birds, the laugh of the woodpecker, the cry of the cuckoo, while starry beds of violet and primrose, and everywhere the sight and scent of leaves and flowers, made an unusual and beautiful setting to the animated groups of riders, horses, and hounds.

The pack and field halted in a rough common deep in heather and furze, shut in on three sides by plantations, and on the fourth by the ancient timber of Gritnam wood. The huntsman and a mounted keeper, with the old "tufter" Moonstone, then trotted into a large

enclosure on the farther side. "Come on, old dog!" called the huntsman, as the hound stopped to feather on either side of the beautiful green ride up which the two men were trotting. The keeper pulled up his cob, and pointed to a clump of beeches surrounded by low brambles and thorns, remarking, "There were three bucks there this morning." The hound, which had been casting from side to side of the walk and through the cover, now bounded towards the beeches, and with a crash three bucks sprang to their feet, and rushed through the wood, followed by the loud and musical baying of the hound. The deer did not break at once, and there was time to join the groups in the common and watch the dispersion of the inhabitants of the plantation, as the hound twisted and turned after the bucks. A big fox stepped out, and a doe crossed, eliciting a chorus of impatient whimpers from the pack before whose eyes it passed. Then the three bucks crossed the open, followed by the single hound, whose deep voice was heard for many minutes as he drove them through the next covert. A blast on the horn now gave the signal that the deer had separated, and half a dozen willing hands led the coupled hounds to the ancient wood in which they were to be laid upon the scent. The long line of men and hounds, followed by the well-mounted field, hurried along through the long narrow glades of a most beautiful and ancient wood of oaks, or under arcades of crab-blossoms, ragged gipsies, brown-coated foresters, hounds and riders, all gradually hurrying on till the whole cavalcade was pushing at a trot through the forest. A pretty little black-eyed boy was leading old Moonstone (literally by a string). "I likes deer-hunting, though 'tis a cruel sport, for the deer does us no harm," he remarked sententiously, as the procession grouped itself round the huntsman, who was sitting alert and eager on his horse in a green ride at the highest point of the wood, where the single buck had crossed. All the hounds were now eager and happy, with heads up, sterns waving. In a few moments they were uncoupled, and dashed down through the wood. If the scene was not a reproduction of Tudor or Plantagenet days, the picture of the early poets is sadly misread. Hounds, all black, white, and tan, spread fanlike across the forest, flinging to right and left, each giving tongue as it owned the scent; master, huntsman, and whips in Lincoln green, under the lights and branching canopy of most ancient beeches; well-mounted and well-dressed riders, in the costume, sober in

colours, sound in texture, which good taste and good sense have elaborated into the perfection of simplicity, now seen, now lost, as they gallop down the glades, among the tall gray pillars of the beech-trunks, and the gossamer green of little thorns, and bushes of ivy and wild rose. Surely some such scene as this must have been in the mind of the author of the *Allegro*, when he bids the reader

> "At his window bid good morrow,
> Through the sweetbriar, or the vine,
> Or the twisted eglantine.
>
> * * * * *
>
> "Oft listening how the hounds and horn
> Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
> From the side of some hoar hill,
> Through the high wood echoing shrill."

A favourite device of a hunted stag in the New Forest is to make for the wood in which other deer are lying, and disturb them, carrying the trail right over their "forms." The difficulty of keeping hounds together when so composed in a thick extensive plantation is very great, and it often happens that, while the main body of the pack keep to the scent of the hunted deer, small parties of hounds, or even a single hound, break off and enjoy a hunt on their own account. It is on record that on one occasion the pack separated into three, each of which division killed a deer. One doe was hunted and killed by three hounds only, who were found eating the carcass. The single efforts of a staghound which is driving a deer are often extremely interesting, as an example of the perseverance, skill, and instinct combined possessed by the modern breed. On the day the opening of which has been described, a stray hound hunted a buck for a full hour without driving it from one large plantation, giving tongue at intervals, and sticking to the scent without the encouragement either of its own companion or of a single rider. At last, a fine fallow buck, which had not yet shed its horns, broke from the enclosure, and cantered lightly across the open common, ringing twice or thrice round clumps of bushes, and lying down for a few minutes to cool itself, though apparently not at all distressed, in a boggy pool. It then leapt a fence into a plantation. The hound then made its exit from the wood, and took up the scent at a swinging gallop, giving tongue loudly at first, but

soon becoming silent as it reached the scene of the buck's circle round the bushes. At least ten minutes were required to unravel these difficulties; but the check did not in the least abate the keenness of the hound, who brought the line up to the wood, and then with a fine burst of "music" dashed into the wood, and there pursued its solitary hunt.

Stag-hunting in the forest begins in August, and the meets are held through September, November, December, January, March, April, and part of May, thus covering a considerable period when fox-hunting has either ceased or not begun. Probably the late spring hunting is the most novel and picturesque experience which a day with the New Forest stag-hounds affords. But to those who enjoy the sight of hounds working, and at the same time have a taste for beautiful scenery, nothing could well be more delightful. Last season, sixty days' sport averaged about the same number of deer killed. Blank days are unknown, and there is the certainty of a run and of a day's enjoyment.

The New Forest ponies are one of the most interesting features both of the landscape and the life of this wild country. Now that the deer are so few as to have disappeared from common view, they are replaced on the heaths, the lawns, the bogs, and among the ancient trees by the many-coloured, wild-looking forms of these almost feral ponies. There is scarcely any portion of the forest—the inmost recesses of Mark Ash woods, the sea-girt heaths of Beaulieu, the sodden rim of Matley Bog, or the smooth lawns of Alum Green, of Stonycross, or Brockenhurst—from which the ponies are absent. There is no solitude in which their quiet movements, as they tread with careful steps cropping the scanty herbage, do not break the stillness by day and night, no bare hillside so barren but the ponies can find on it some humble plant to crop between the stones.

The brood mares of the forest are perhaps the nearest approach to the wild horse now existing in this country, so far as their life and habits entitle them to the name. Many of these have run for twenty years in the heaths and woods, unbroken, unshod, and almost without experience of the halter except when "pounded" by the "agisters" for occasional marking. Their graceful walk and elegant shape, their sagacity and hardihood, their speed and endurance, and, not least, the independence and prosperity which their possession confers on the com-

moners and borderers who live in and around the forest, give to these ponies an interest apart from that attached to the life of any other breed of domesticated animal in this country. Nearly all the work done elsewhere by large horses seems to be performed in and around the forest by these miniature ponies, drawing miniature carts. Singly, or driven tandem-fashion, they draw bricks, haul loads of brushwood and poles, trot almost any distance to markets and fairs in carts and gigs, and will carry a heavy forester safely and well

> "Over hill, over dale,
> Through bush, through briar,"

without fatigue or stumble. There is something in the fact of owning horses—be they only ponies—which seems to raise a man in his own esteem, and the jolly foresters have an air and demeanour, whether standing in front of their mud-built cottages, or riding across the heaths to drive in their various stock, which belongs of right to the equestrian order of mankind.

"The love of pony breeding," writes Mr. W. Moens, of Tweed, near Boldre, one of the most energetic founders of the Association for the Improvement of the Breed of New Forest Ponies, in his pamphlet on the subject, "lies deep in the breasts of most commoners, not only on account of its somewhat speculative nature, but for the animals themselves. The ponies running in the forest are rarely left for long without being looked after to see how they are doing, or at least being inquired after by their owners, of those living near or working in the forest. Even the very children of borderers know to whom the mares and foals belong, so that the forest ponies afford much amusement to the forest folk, and nothing more easily excites them than a rumour that something or other is about to be done that may injure their interests as regards their pony stock. Some of the large breeders own as many as one hundred or more ponies, many forty or fifty, the smaller occupiers own as many as they can keep in the winter season. These, according to the fancy of the owners, are distributed in various parts of the forest, where they are marked by the agisters, or marksmen, by cutting the hairs of the tails in various ways. Thus the ponies haunting each quarter of the forest are known, the agister comparing his own marks with those made by the owner, and with his description of his ponies. Should any ponies

The Forest Ponies.

stray into the parks, other pastures, or the lanes around the forest, information given to one of the agisters causes it to be soon known to whom the straying ponies, which go by the name of 'lane-haunters,' belong."

The present system of identification has taken the place of a far more picturesque and exciting method of marking the stock, the "Drift of the Forest." This custom was a survival of an Act of Henry VIII., which ordained that all forests and chases were to be driven yearly within fifteen days after Michaelmas, and if any mares or fillies were found which were not likely to bear good foals "the same unprofitable beasts were to be killed and buried." Long after this drastic command had ceased to be regarded, the "Drift" was maintained, as a kind of census for the marking of all forest stock. As nearly as possible on the same day, keepers, agisters, and owners rode out to drive the different walks of the forest towards the pounds. These were not necessarily railed enclosures. The forest hardly contained a fence in the old days, and where, round the few villages, the roads were bordered by fences, the space between was ingeniously used as a trap. At Brockenhurst, for instance, the foals, ponies, cattle, calves, and donkeys were forced towards the lane which, with its high hedges, runs by the side of Brockenhurst Manor towards Beaulieu. Once past the manor mill, by the Boldre River, the gate across the road was shut, and the long lane was filled from end to end with a promiscuous throng of wild and tame beasts, thrusting, neighing, bellowing, and crowding, like the spoils of Amalek. From ten to twenty men would join in the work of collecting the animals from the open forest. This needed both skill and knowledge to perform properly. The wilder ponies, who had unpleasant recollections of branding and other rough handling in the pounds, would often make a determined effort to break back, taking their way at speed through the most difficult and treacherous ground. There too, as in the runs of New South Wales, the animals which have been ridden in the business before seemed to take a pleasure in aiding to secure the wild ones, and the most successful means to bring in a fugitive was often for the rider to sit still, and leave the pony he rode to choose its own line, and the time for making the last push which turned the other back to the herd.

The history of these New Forest ponies is by no means ascertained.

They are not an indigenous animal like the red deer, but the uniformity in size and appearance suggests a common stock and ancestry. The first is, however, probably due to the almost feral state in which these ponies live in the wild district, from which their food-supply is entirely obtained. No pony above a certain size is likely to survive in the forest, for the simple reason that it cannot find food to maintain it. In winter, by browsing all day and the greater part of the night, hardy little "foresters" of from twelve to thirteen hands high can just make both ends meet, though they are extremely thin and ragged. But anything much above that size would need artificial support, and its progeny would deteriorate. On the other hand, their size does not tend to fall much *below* the standard at which Nature sets the limit, which, in the case of the New Forest pony, seems to be from twelve to thirteen and a half hands. The natural appetite and needs of these hardy creatures prompt them to do the best for themselves from day to day with a constancy hardly to be understood by human beings whose minds are not concentrated by necessity on the absorbing effort to satisfy the hourly cravings of hunger. Nature levels up as it levels down, and this is probably the clue to the uniformity in size of all wild animals, as well as of these half-wild ponies.

The condition of this stability is of course that man interferes nowhere. But the practice of selecting and selling away from the forest all the best of the ponies did threaten a marked deterioration in the stock about ten years ago, not only in size but in quality. Now the "quality" of the ponies is obvious and unmistakable. They have none of that lumpiness and want of due proportion so often seen in ponies; on the contrary, they are far more like miniature horses, and horses with a strain of Arab blood in them, as their fine eye, small heads, and high quarters show. Whatever the origin of the ponies in the past, this high-bred appearance *has* a history, and a very interesting one. They are of the blood of Eclipse, or rather of his sire, supplemented in later years by Arab strains of historical excellence.

The story of the Arab strain in these ponies is mixed up with one of the earliest romances of the modern thoroughbred. The Duke of Cumberland, son of George II., who in his later years became Ranger of the New Forest, exchanged an Arabian horse for a Yorkshire thorough-

bred, which he called Mask, after the place from which it came. Mask was descended from the Darley Arab, brought from Aleppo in the time of Queen Anne, and from the Byerly Turk, thus possessing a pedigree going back to the days of Charles I. Mask was, however, sold for a small sum at the death of the Duke, and remained for some years in the neighbourhood of the New Forest, where he became the sire of numbers of forest ponies, and also of the celebrated Eclipse. Recently the Queen sent to the forest two thoroughbred Arabs—Abegan and Yirassan—the former a gift of the Imaum of Muscat. Lastly, in 1891, the Association for the Improvement of the Breed of New Forest Ponies was founded at Lyndhurst, which holds an annual show of pony sires, and grants premiums to such as come up to the standard required, on condition that they are allowed to run in the forest. This pony show is one of the prettiest sights of the forest year. It is held annually at the end of April, just as the leaves are appearing on the beeches and thorns, not in some formal show-yard in a town, but on a lovely lawn outside Lyndhurst, called Swan Green.

The beauty of this little sylvan theatre has already been described as the first scene in the forest which presents itself on the way to Mark Ash from Lyndhurst town. The scene at the spring pony show in the present year was a busy contrast to the ordinary quiet of the little green. In these country gatherings the puzzle is to know where the people come from and how they get there. It had been pouring with rain all the morning, and the grove beyond the green was dripping with sunlit showers of drops. Yet a large part of the forest population seemed to be present. Under an oak on the hillside a white pony, saddled but riderless, was cropping the leaves from a thorn-bush, in company with four or five sooty, ragged, wet, long-tailed colts, dragged in from the forest. Smart well-groomed pony stallions were showing off their paces on the road on either side. In the centre a ring of about an acre had been enclosed with hurdles, within which were the ponies, their owners, or leaders, and the judges; and around, in the every-day dress of working life, the men and boys of the forest. "Wild ponies and wild people" was the remark of a bystander. But the roughness of the forester only extends to costume; his manners are nearly always prepossessing, and his conversation, on topics in which like that of pony-

breeding, he is an authority, is as brisk and epigrammatic as that of a farmer in the Yorkshire dales. Smart people in breeches and gaiters, old foresters with faces rugged as their oaks, short black-eyed "gippos" prying and peeping between the broad shoulders of the native race, and all the school children of Lyndhurst, were grouped round the ring. Within it, the ponies were being led round in procession before the judges, who, notebook in hand, were marking the merits and defects of each. A curly-headed sweep headed the troop, carrying, instead of a whip, his soot-brush, with which he occasionally whacked his handsome rough pony, a piece of "effect," which had evidently been carefully thought out beforehand. Most of their ponies had spent the whole of the last trying season in the forest, and showed evident signs of the privations they had undergone. Many had their rough coats still almost unshed. This produces a curious effect, for though the forest ponies are of all known colours, the masses of unkempt, shaggy winter coat, which cling to them, are of colours quite unknown to the eye which only sees groomed horses, or those which have been out at grass for a few months in a meadow. All sorts of shades of soot-colour, sand-colour, dusty brown, smoky gray, lie in rags and tatters on their flanks, colours which alter again when, as in the present case, the mop-like mass is drenched with wet, or drying in the sun. Yet the quality of the race shows in the fine head, and large eye, and above all, when they begin to move. Unshod, and untrained, they step with all the careless freedom of a race-horse, giving that curious impression of moving *in detail*, which the shuffling jog of a coarse bred pony never creates. The contrast between the animals towed in by halters, with the mud of the bog still clinging to their flanks, and their civilised relations "in service," is perhaps the most striking feature of the show. But the condition in which the true forest pony appears after his winter in the open, is an excellent guide to the size, points and quality necessary for combining the maximum of speed and strength, with the power to endure the hard life in which they are born and bred ; and the judges seem to grasp the "true inwardness" of each pony's merits through any depth of matted hair and mud, and in spite of any want of flesh between hide and bones. The privations of the last season fell heavily on all grazing stock, whether semi-wild, or kept upon the farms. Yet it was remarked that ponies left to run wild in the forest did better during the long drought

than those which were "taken up" and put into pastures on inclosed land. They got into the recesses of the bogs and swamps, and there found more food and better, than was available on the burnt-up meadows of the farms. These ponies must in fact be judged in the first place from their power to exist as wild animals: the other qualities follow.

The old saying that "a good horse is never a bad colour," seems true of these "Foresters." In the endless circle moving round the ring, there was as much difference in the colour of the animals as in the appearance of the men and boys who led, hauled, or *pushed* them round. On the whole blacks and roans seemed the most numerous. Of seventy animals in the ring at one time, thirty were either roans, grays or blacks. As for the two-year-olds, wild little fellows fresh from the forest, awkward, reluctant, shaggy, and "pixie-ridden" to the last degree, their colours were so obscured by long hair and wet, that blacks, browns, and bays seemed all shrouded in a dingy earth colour. But all walked with freedom and grace, and most would probably have fetched from £7 to £12 as they stood. It is said that the yearlings if removed to the good pastures of Sussex, Dorset, or Somerset, will grow a hand taller than their dams.

It must not be supposed, from the rough and poor condition of these creatures when seen in April, after exposure to the long hard winter, that their life is uniformly one of privation and hardship. The health and freedom which they enjoy together make them on the whole a very happy and contented race. During the summer each sire collects his little troop of mares, and so far as possible keeps them from the approach of any rival. In the spring when the foals are born, there are few prettier sights than the little mares and their young, which they then bring into the most sheltered and beautiful lawns near that part of the forest which they haunt. Later in the year, when the sun is hot and the midge and forest fly—perhaps the greatest pest to horses which exists in England, begin to worry them in the thick cover and low ground, ponies and cattle alike leave the low ground at about 9 a.m., and until the afternoon frequent the "shades" or open ground where they stand close together half asleep, swishing off the flies with their long tails. The accurate observer, whose work has been quoted previously, thinks that these shades are chosen according to the prevailing wind, "sometimes being chosen in the full sun, where the summer breeze is better felt than in the surrounding

bottoms; at other times they will stand in a favourite part of some forest stream, or in a drift away over the railway. Blackdown is a favourite shade, being a ridge surrounded by bottoms, where there is plenty of good feed in the driest summers, with abundance of food and water. This district is perhaps the most favoured of any, being haunted by over 600 ponies and cattle, or more than one-tenth of the whole stock run in the forest." This was the district which it was proposed to take as a military rifle range, a proposal which was successfully resisted largely on the ground that the ponies would thus lose their favourite summer haunt.

CHAPTER IV

THE NORTHERN FOREST

Stony Cross—Rufus Stone and the Rufus Legend—A brief for the prosecution of Sir Walter Tyrrell—The view from Stony-Cross Plain—Bramshaw Wood—Malwood—Minstead and its park.

THE great ridge of Stony-Cross Plain divides the northern from the central forest. Along it runs the ancient road from Winchester to Ringwood, and thence to the port of Poole. From its summit the whole of the forest, north, south, and east, is seen in endless waves of woods ; and in the deep glen below its eastern shoulder is the spot where Rufus was killed by the arrow of Sir Walter Tyrrell on the evening of the second of August, A.D. 1100. In the monkish stories the death of Rufus became a text, not for the vengeance which comes on the despoiler of the poor, as in the case of the death of the Conqueror's other children on the scene of their father's oppressions, but of the vengeance of God upon the robber of the Church. The fate of the brutal scoffer who mocked at the holy saints, who kept abbeys without their abbots, sees without their bishops, and the very throne of Canterbury itself vacant for three years while he fattened on the incomes of the servants of God, is the theme of ecclesiastical story. It was almost inevitable that this colour should be put on the sudden death of the spoiler by zealous Churchmen. Those who see in the denunciations of the Church, and in the prophecies of an impending requital which were in circulation up to the day of Rufus's death, a motive, which alters the part of Tyrrell from the unconscious instrument to the secret emissary of vengeance, will find some curious circumstantial evidence in an examina-

tion of the spot in which the king's body was found, assuming that that now marked as the place where Rufus fell is rightly identified. There is good reason for thinking that in spite of the lapse of time, tradition in this respect is right. The place is close to Malwood, where the king was lodging the night before, and had dined and drunk on the very day of his death.

Malwood has for centuries, probably from the days of Rufus, been the residence of men whose business has been to know and visit every part of the forest in that particular "walk." Those in the house at the time of the king's death must have had knowledge of the spot where the body was found. Even if Purkiss, the charcoal-burner, who drove it in his cart to Winchester, did not mention to the other foresters the scene of so dreadful a discovery, it is almost certain that after the dispersion of the party at the lodge, the flight of Tyrrell, and the desperate ride of Henry to Winchester, in order to seize the succession to the Crown with the blessings of the Church, which had banned his brother, the domestics must have stolen down the hill to look at the body where it lay. The death of princes, even if not followed by the appearance of the caladrus, the ill-omened bird, which, according to the monkish bestiaries, only appeared on earth to bring news of the death of kings, must always be a topic of awe and curiosity to those near the scene, even if fear closes their mouths and prevents them from paying due reverence to the body. The murder of Absalom the beautiful in the wood of Ephraim was known to more than the "captains of the host," though they dissembled all knowledge of the deed. The descendants of the charcoal-burner, who carried the body to Winchester, enjoyed for centuries the rights given them as a reward, among others that of taking all such wood as they could gather "by hook or by crook," dead branches, that is, which have not yet fallen, but might be broken off, though not lopped by axe or bill. Thus the evidence as to the exact place of the king's death does not depend on history, or upon general tradition. It is fixed by a concurrent and very coherent though independent set of circumstances. In the first place by the fact which we have glanced at, that by the fixed and unchanging order of the forest there have lived in continued succession, within ten minutes' ride of the place, persons employed for eight hundred years to traverse daily that particular part of the forest, Malwood

Walk, in the exercise of the same duty, the supervision of the deer and the wood, men to whom by the very nature of their business every tree, rivulet, and pool is a familiar object, frequently associated with some fact, far less important, such as the death of an eagle, or the leap of a deer, which is a part of the ordinary knowledge of the wood transmitted from one generation of foresters to the next. Secondly, the spot originally marked by an oak tree, was again marked by a stone, set up by Lord Delaware, then warden of the forest, in 1745, which stone was afterwards cased in iron in 1841. If the tree which in 1745 was in such a state of decay that its place was taken by the stone, was the same which was standing at the time of Rufus's death, it must have been more than 650 years old at the time of its total disappearance—not an impossible age by any means, for the fragment in Brockenhurst churchyard probably stood there quite as early, and Gilpin speaks of "a few venerable oaks in the New Forest that chronicle upon their furrowed trunks ages before the Conquest." But the tree may have been a shoot, or sapling or seedling, of the original oak, and still have identified the spot, just as the present "Cadenham oak," which buds at Christmas, marks the site of the old tree.

Taking these considerations as adequate to maintain the truth of tradition as to the exact spot at which the king died, the inferences from an examination of the ground are as follows. The king was shot, not *in* the wood, but at the very edge, almost at the last tree. Immediately west of "Rufus Stone" the good soil stops, and a very poor, steep, marshy, slope begins, which runs right up to the top of the hill by Stony Cross. Wood does not grow on it now, and never could have grown, for the nature of the soil has not changed, and remains in the same condition for the growth or non-growth of timber, as in the days of the Conquest. Again, the legend says that the king was looking after a wounded deer, "shading his eyes with his hand." Now he would not have needed to shade his eyes had he been in the thick forest, though as the deer would naturally run out of the wood across the open, and the sun was in the west, for it was late on an August day, the account exactly fits the supposition that William was standing where he is said to have stood and gazing after the wounded deer, as it ran out across the Stony-Cross Common, when he received

the fatal arrow. William, then, was in the open, or on the very edge of the wood. That he should have been shot by accident in such a place, with a weapon like a bow, seems most improbable. Moreover it is likely that both he and Tyrrell were waiting for deer to be *driven* to them. The place is still a natural pass for deer, and the "Rufus" Stone stands on the neck of a little bluff, on either side of which driven deer would naturally pass on their way up the valley, and up which they do pass now when hunted. Supposing Rufus to have turned and shot one, his back or side would be presented to the man who was guarding the other pass below the knoll. On the other hand it was a place which gave admirable opportunities for the escape of an assassin. Just above, or over Stony-Cross Plain ran the sound road, along the high open ridges, straight across the north of the forest, not to Lymington or Beaulieu, which would probably be ports friendly to the king whose property the forest was, but across the Avon, out of the reach of summary forest law, down to Poole, whence ships were constantly passing over the Channel for Normandy. The course which Tyrrell is said to have taken fits exactly with the theory that he committed the murder here, with the intention of instant flight by this convenient road. The story runs that he rode to the Avon at the spot still called Tyrrell's Ford, and, there after forcing the smith to shoe his horse with the shoes reversed, killed the man, that he might not betray him. A yearly fine paid by the owners of the house where he crossed at what is still called Tyrrell's ford, is said to record the memory of the passage. Whether this legend be true in detail or not, it seems agreed that Tyrrell did escape from Poole to Normandy, and that there, after giving to Abbot Suger his account of the king's death in which he claimed that it was accidental, took the unusual step—for a man with a guiltless conscience—of making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in performing which he died.

The view from the height of Stony Cross Plain, which was the scene of Tyrrell's Ride, gives perhaps the best idea of the extent of the forest and its relation to the splendid country which surrounds it. Along the back of the ridge, on the high firm ground, the ancient road runs from Cadenham, where it is joined by the main roads from Winchester and Southampton, straight across the forest, to Ringwood. This northern ridge is almost the highest land in the forest. Beyond it, far to the

south, the whole district falls away to the Solent, beyond which the hills of the Isle of Wight are distinctly seen. This "prospect" of the forest has nothing of the chess-board appearance, usual in extensive views in southern England. Right away to the sea-shore the eye sees nothing but woods, commons, and heaths, not in squares and patches, but in a succession of long ridges which seem to run out from right to left from a shoulder of higher land to the west. Lyndhurst spire shoots up in the centre, Minstead, Bolderwood, Rhinefield, Wilverly, and Christchurch bound it on the west. Eastward, the eye ranges across Southampton Water to the long line of woods, and faintly seen white houses near Netley Abbey, and the old fortress of Calshot Castle. Thus the whole southern forest is within sight, with its natural and ancient boundaries of the Avon Valley, Southampton Water, and the Solent.

Looking backwards, north and north-east, the Wiltshire Downs are seen, and to the right the chalk hills beyond Romsey, abutting on Winchester. The two great cities of Wessex, Winchester and Salisbury, here have joint claims upon the forest. Timber for the roofing of Salisbury was cut in Bramshaw Wood, where it abuts on Wiltshire, and adjacent are the lands of the wardens of Winchester College. Days might be spent in gazing on this magnificent panorama, without exhausting its beauties. Across the valley to the north, at the deepest point of which Rufus met his death, the beautiful beech woods of Eyeworth Walk and Bramble Hill are spread on the slope like curly fleeces. As the day goes on, the cattle come trooping up from the woods to seek relief from the forest flies on the open "shade" in front of the inn, and the air is resonant with the music of their bells.

Malwood, where stood the house in which Rufus lay the night before his death, and where till the present generation, the keeper of Malwood Walk had his lodge, is the eastern buttress of this high Stony-Cross Ridge. Sir William Vernon Harcourt's beautiful house now stands on the site; long, low, timbered and gabled, it is perhaps the most pleasing of the many new mansions which now stand on sites leased from the Crown on the ground once occupied by the old lodges. Between Malwood and Lyndhurst lies the beautiful village and park of Minstead. It is difficult to account for the change which the barrier of a paling makes in the general aspect of trees and herbage within and without.

The park was clearly taken from the forest, yet every blade of grass seems different, and every tree has a "domesticated" look. Probably this is due to the work of the scythe on the one, and of the inevitable tendency to improve on nature in the other. Outside, in the forest, the grass has never been mown, and constantly browsed and trampled by cattle. The trees have never been lopped, except as the wind tore off the rotten branches. Thus the grass of the forest is like a bowling alley set with flowers, the grass of the park, the common and cultivated verdure of the hayfield. The positive contribution of the park to the forest landscape is in the number of trees of species not indigenous to the forest, which are properly planted round great houses. Thus at Minstead Manor the long drive is fringed by masses of rhododendron twenty feet high. Their blaze of red flower on the dark-green background of shining leafage, the yellow clusters of azalea, and the few gigantic araucarias, which rise from the mass below without a single dead branch, make a beautiful incident in the midst of the natural forest. The fine mansion, and ancient and picturesque stables and offices, the kennels and gardens bowered in this mass of exotic shrubbery, with all the evidences of ancient and distinguished inhabitation suggest a train of thought different from, but not out of harmony with, that which arises in the contemplation of the natural woods.

CHAPTER V

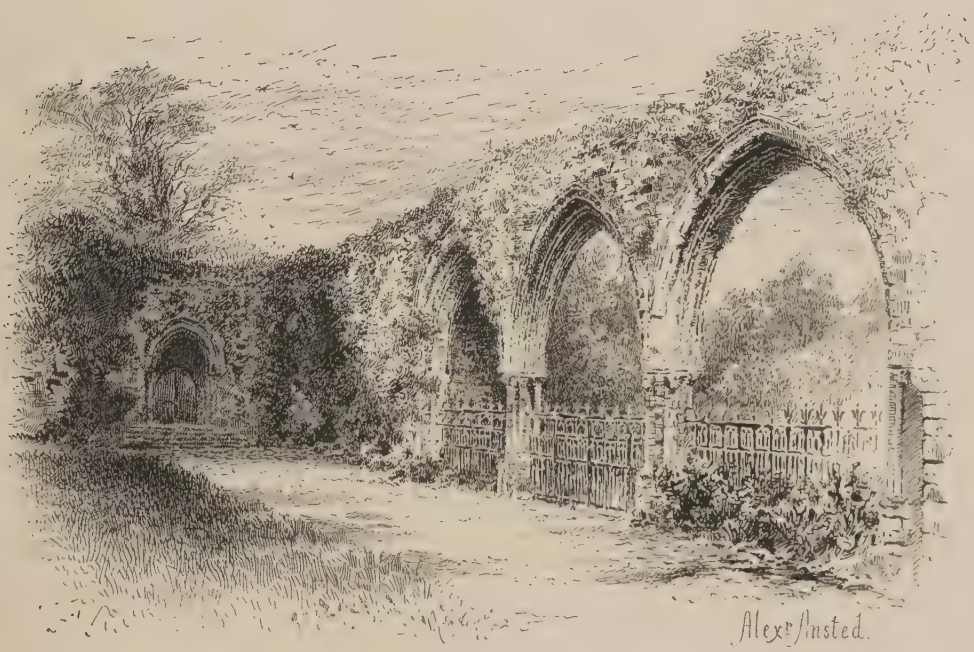
THE SOUTHERN FOREST AND BEAULIEU

Beaulieu Abbey and its history—The ruins at St. Leonard's—The Solent shore—Cobbett's admiration of the view—Sowley Pond—Wild-fowl—The Beaulieu river and Buckler's Hard—Nelson's flagship built in the forest—Commoners and squatters—Their houses at Hill Top—Forest rights—Pigs and pannage—Swineherds—Rights of fuel—Future of the forest.

In the purview of the forest the great and ancient domain of Beaulieu claims separate and unique consideration. Geographically it is the riverine and maritime district of the forest, in which the Abbey of Beaulieu itself, at the head of its tidal river, marks the point of connection between the inland portions and the beautiful Solent shore. It was part of the original forest of William the Conqueror, and might have remained like the rest of the great hunting-ground, a wild and sparsely populated region, whose main interest to the modern world is that the changes, which make history, have been so little felt that in its present condition it hardly invites historical inquiry, because it presents itself almost unchanged by centuries, as a fossil fact.

The act of King John in granting this magnificent domain for the support of an abbey of Cistercians, withdrew it at once and for ever from the deadening, though conservative, influence of the forest law, and from that moment Beaulieu has a separate and dignified history, the human interest of which exceeds that of the forest itself. The resources and splendour of this domain are such that it has, from the appointment of its first abbot until the present time, maintained its position as an *imperium in imperio* through all the tumults of history. It is of vast extent, yet the boundaries of the Manor Bank have never been broken or

encroached upon. Backed by the forest and bounded by the sea, fertile in corn, in wine—the remains of its terraced vineyards and the house of the winepress still survive—and inclosing nearly the whole of a splendid tidal river, it could exist as an independent whole, alike in beauty, position, and natural resources. Whether in mortmain—the "dead hand" of the Church—or in private possession, its resources have been consecutively in the power of a single owner, who has enjoyed a prestige



Beaulieu Abbey.

from its possession such as is not conferred by any domain of similar extent. The privileges granted to the abbots by King John, and confirmed by charter after charter of his successors, were at least equal to those enjoyed by the kings themselves, when the manor was part of their forest. The abbey enjoyed every ordinary forest right, and some which were exceptional; the abbots might hunt within the manor and follow their game into the forest a bowshot beyond its boundaries; their hounds were excepted from the provisions as to mutilation if found in the forest, and to this day the manor shares with only one other, that of Brocken-

hurst, the privilege of feeding sheep in the forest. The Prince Abbots of Beaulieu sat among the Lords spiritual in Parliament for 200 years, and after the confiscation of their estates the prestige of the possession of the manor seems never to have failed to confer upon its owners the dignity of a peerage, or a step in rank on those who already enjoyed it. In 1538 Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Lord High Chancellor, bought the entire manor, then worth £428 6s. 8d. a year, making, according to Cobbett's estimate, £8,500 of our money, for £2,000. He was created Earl of Southampton. In the reign of William III. Ralph, Lord Montagu, married the heiress of the Earl of Southamption, and was created Duke of Montagu. Edward Hussey, who married one of the co-heiresses of John Duke of Montagu, was created an earl—Earl of Beaulieu. At this time the manor was for one life divided, for the other daughter of John Duke of Montagu married the Duke George her cousin. She left a daughter, and the Earl of Beaulieu dying without children, the estate passed to this daughter, who married the Duke of Buccleuch. The great-grandson of that Duke, Lord Henry Scott, became possessor of Beaulieu, and was created Baron Montagu in 1887. Thus the possession of Beaulieu seems to carry with it a patent of nobility as well as the enjoyment of one of the most beautiful estates in England.

The history of the abbey is perhaps as good an example as can be found of the magnificence, method, and good sense with which these great foundations were projected, developed, and maintained. The story which attributes the original grant to a fit of superstitious remorse, may or may not be founded on fact ; if it is, the subsequent record of the use made of the gift is in strange contrast to its inception. The tale is that the king summoned the abbots of the white-robed Cistercians to meet him at Lincoln, and that enraged at their hostility to himself, he ordered them to be trampled to death by wild horses. His soldiers refused to become executioners, and the abbots fled. Next morning the king confided to his confessor that he had dreamt during the night that he had been brought up for judgment before St. Peter, who had handed him over to the abbots to be beaten, and that he was still aching from the blows. The confessor induced him to apologise to the abbots, and to make reparation by founding an abbey of Cistercians at Beaulieu.

There is no need of this legend to account for John's anxiety to have

at least one body of powerful and well-affected ecclesiastics on his side. From the time of this great gift the Cistercians remained loyal to the king, even against the orders of the Pope himself; and even during the interdict, when the whole realm lay under the Papal ban, as the result of John's quarrel with Rome, these English Cistercians celebrated Divine service at the command of their abbots, for which they were excommunicated by Innocent III. The king restored to them their lands which had been seized on account of the interdict, and at the fourth Lateran council held at Rome in the year 1215, at which were present 312 bishops, and more than 200 abbots and priors, the abbot of Beaulieu, on behalf of King John, impeached Archbishop Langton of high treason for his share in the direction of the barons' revolt. The founding of Beaulieu was a piece of policy on the part of the king, the reason for which is sufficiently clear by its results. But the magnificence of its development was partly due to fortune. The piety of John's son, Henry III., enriched it for conscience' sake; one of his numerous grants was that of the profits of three years from his stud of horses in the forest, to pay for masses for his father's soul. In his reign the abbey church was completed, and the greater part of the buildings in the precinct were either projected or begun. The church was as large as that of Romsey; but though the lines of its foundations have been traced, and are kept in evidence with the same care which is bestowed on the preservation of each and every portion of the ruins, the building itself has disappeared. It is hard to conceive a greater shock to religious sentiment than the ruthless destruction of this abbey church, while all that was useful for secular purposes was retained; the barns and cellars kept for the storage of the wealth which the land still yielded to its new owner, the stones of the house of God taken to build Hurst Castle, and the lead of its roof to cover the towers of the sister fortress at Calshot.

The buildings which remain are still among the most beautiful ruins of the south, and serve to show the scale on which the abbey was conceived; and the wisdom which dictated the choice of its site. They lie on a gently sloping meadow, in which the great wall of the precinct stands here and there in gray masses, marking the lines of an inclosure a mile and a quarter round. The mass of the buildings, the church, the cloisters, the abbot's house, the guest house, and last but not least, the

means and appliances which converted into wealth the commodities which fed the colony, stood close to the very head of the tidal river. There were the mill, the storehouses, and a quay, to which the ships from France, Spain and the Hanse towns came as the natural port of what was at once an outlet for the trade of the forest, and the seat of a great industrial community. Part of this quay is submerged; but part remains covered with grass and flowers; and this quiet, butterfly-haunted spot is still called Cheapside. Opposite and abutting on this quay are the ruins of the abbey, and the beautiful "Palace House," the centre of which is the lofty "Gate House" of the abbey, while round it the buildings of a modern mansion are grouped with such skill that the house forms a whole as completely adapted to its setting and surroundings as the abbey itself. Within the great wall of the precinct are the refectory, now converted into the parish church, and the remains of the exquisite cloister court, of the chapter house, and of a huge chamber, still in good repair, in which the guests of the abbey were housed. This last is a good example of the simple, large-minded way in which the monks set to work to build for ordinary purposes. They built two gable ends as wide as they had space for, or where space was no object, as wide as the forest oaks would give them cross-beams for their roof. Then they joined their ends by straight thick walls pierced with windows, thick and massive with no need for buttresses or contrivances to eke out bad workmanship or save expense. There are several remains of their great storehouses, a wine-store, and a gable sixty feet wide at the

Gate House, Beaulieu.

abbey, and at St. Leonard's, a branch colony nearer to the Solent is probably the largest building of its kind existing. In the ruins of the abbey there are enough relics of interest to give material for days of minute inquiry.

It is hard to understand why Cobbett, whose eye for scenery, and admiration for the great religious foundations destroyed by Henry VIII., might have been expected to make him view with sympathy and appreciation, a scene in which two such elements of interest are combined, is

Beaulieu.

rather cold in his praises of Beaulieu. "The abbey," he writes in his *Ride from Lyndhurst to Godalming*, "is not situated in a very fine place. The situation is low; the lands above it rather a swamp than otherwise" —he must mean the lands higher up the stream, for the slopes above the abbey were the ancient site of vineyards, and necessarily dry and sunny— "pretty enough altogether," he continues, "but by no means a fine place." Few people will be inclined to assent to this. As a site for the colony for which it was chosen Beaulieu is almost perfect. The lake

above and the river below, meadows so rich that the elms grow there to a size which rivals the forest oaks, the background of magnificent woods which run back for a mile to the crest of the great plain of Beaulieu Heath which lies above, give an air of propriety and richness to the surroundings of the abbey for which it would be difficult to find a parallel elsewhere. The view of the whole, looking up the river, the natural approach at a time when the forest was a trackless half-desert region, towards the abbey, the bridge, and the little cluster of houses and the mill which overhung the dark pool below the river, made it as fine a place to *look at*, which we take to be the meaning of Beaulieu, as could be desired, and one of the most beautiful heads of an estuary which can be found in England.[1] Cobbett, however, had seen another part of the ancient domain of the abbey before spending any time at Beaulieu itself, a place which he declared to have impressed him far more favourably. Neither Cobbett's conclusions, nor, so far as modern authority goes, his archæology, seems quite consonant with facts. But the accident which took him past Beaulieu to the ruins at "St. Leonard's," led incidentally to a description of that unrivalled view from the maritime side of the monks' domain, which is well worth quoting. "Happening to meet a man before I got into the village, I, pointing with my whip across towards the abbey said to the man, 'I suppose there is a bridge down here to get across to the abbey.' 'That's not the abbey, sir,' says he. 'The abbey is about four miles further on.' Having chapter and verse for it I pushed on towards farmer John Biel's. When I got there I really thought at first that this must have been the site of the abbey of Beaulieu; because the name meaning *fine place*, this was a thousand times finer place than that where the abbey, as I afterwards found, really stood. After looking about for some time, I was satisfied that it had not been an abbey; but the place is one of the finest that ever was seen in this world. It stands at about half-a-mile distance from the water's edge at high-water mark, and at about the middle of the space along the coast from Calshot Castle to Lymington Haven. To the right you see Hurst Castle and that narrow passage called the Needles: and to the left you see Spithead, and all the ships that are sailing or lie anywhere opposite

[1] A good inn, the Montagu Arms, with modern comfort and old prices, must be counted among the attractions of Beaulieu.

Portsmouth. The Isle of Wight is right before you, and you have in view at one and the same time, the towns of Yarmouth, Newtown, Cowes, and Newport, with all the beautiful fields of the island, lying upon the side of a great bank before and going up the ridge of hills in the middle of the island.

"The ruins consist of part of the walls of a building about 200 feet long and 40 wide. It has been turned into a barn, in part, and the rest

Interior of Beaulieu Church.

into cattle-sheds. But there is another ruin, which was a church or chapel, and stands very near to the farm-house. This little church or chapel appears to have been a very beautiful building. A part only of its walls are standing, but you see, by what remains of the arches, that it was finished in a manner the most elegant and expensive of the day in which it was built. Part of the outside of the building is now surrounded by the farmer's garden. The interior is partly a pig-stye, partly a goose-pen."

Cobbett declared these ruins to have been once the hospital of Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Modern authorities say that it was a branch establishment of the Beaulieu monks, containing their enormous granary, a chapel, and the lodging for the workers of iron at Sowley, and of the salt-pits on the shore. Everything remains as it was in Cobbett's time except that the last of the race of John Biel has departed from the farm. But the beautiful little chapel is no longer a goose-pen, but covered, floor, walls, and windows, with a wonderful growth of plants and weeds. It abuts on the garden of the farm, a handsome solid old house with low comfortable rooms and a row of dormer windows in the roof. Both gables of the chapel stand, and the remains of rich niches and carved work peep out from the ivy and trailing plants. Flowers blossom all over these walls, roses, cranesbill, yellow barberry in masses, bramble-blossoms, odd garden herbs, fennel and rue, yellow mustard, honesty, and beds of "burrs" and pink nettle. It is a perfect sun-trap, and the black ivy-berries are as big as currants and in bunches so heavy they hang their heads. But the remains of the enormous barn are the great sight of the place. It is far larger than Cobbett says. The present writer makes it 80 paces long and 25 wide. The gable ends are colossal, built up without window or buttress. Apparently the task of providing a new roof to cover this huge and high-pitched span was beyond the powers of later generations, so the front wall was moved back many paces and a narrower and meaner building fitted within the old one. The stock-doves fly out of the crevices in these huge gables as if out of a cliff. Every buttress on the side walls is "trimmed" with golden fringes of hard fern, and the ivy stems on the eastern end resemble the knots in ship's cables.

All the way down through the manor towards the south the ground falls gradually lower and lower, divided pretty equally between woods and arable land, with fine farm-houses, the view of the blue Solent opens out in the way Cobbett describes. *Belle Vue* rather than *Beaulieu* would be an appropriate name, the former being proper rather to the place you look *from* than the place you look *at*. The coast of the forest is here so sheltered by the screen of the Isle of Wight hills that it is not till within half a mile of the shore, beyond the ruins at St. Leonard's, that the tops of the oaks begin to incline in

one direction, the certain sign of sea breezes. The cultivated fields run down almost to the beach, and partridges may be seen feeding in the growing corn within a stone's throw of the breakers. Seen across the narrow waters, the line of the island stretches back eastward beyond the line of sight, and the visitor might imagine himself on the shores of the Hellespont, separated only from another continent by the narrow strip of dissociable ocean, guarded like the entrance to the Propontis by castles and fortresses, where the parapets and battlements of Hurst break the

The Edge of the Forest near Lymington.

line of sky, and the series of batteries old and new line the opposite coast with signs and tokens that here also are set the gates of empire. The long low sweep of shore which runs from the sandspit at the mouth of the Beaulieu river to the point at which it begins to be silted up by the mud deposits of the Lymington river, is fronted by shingle, and crossed by innumerable groins of oak trunks driven deep into the ground. Between these the shore slopes up to a green bank, which makes a beautiful turf drive within a few yards of the sea, backed by hedges as green and luxuriant as any on the manor, and fields of growing crops. It is not difficult to picture the "joy in harvest" of those whose lot it is

to cut and reap the corn by this lovely inland sea, where a man may leave binding the sheaves, or the mowers rest at midday, and cross the fence to where the waves come tumbling in before the fresh breeze blowing in from the Needles and the island fortress of Hurst. Further to the south the shore rises with low cliffs, and the shrubs and flowers of the mainland creep quite down among the shingle ; bramble, and hawthorn, grow among the gray and colourless plants of the seashore, and among the sea-thistles and horned poppies, tiny flowers of wild rose blossom, so low that their petals look like little pink shells lying amongst the pebbles.

Lymington, the ancient port of the Royal Forest, as Beaulieu was of the Abbey Estates, lies further west. Its long well-built street runs at right angles to the head of the ancient harbour, at the top of the great mud-silted lagoon which joins it to the Solent. Below the steep hill on which stands the town are the old quays, building slips, and wharves, so close that the masts of the vessels seem to rise among the apple-trees of the gardens. In the meadows near the harbour's mouth are quaint old docks and the remains of what were once elegant pavilions and boat houses. But the sea trade of Lymington has passed to Southampton, and its seaside visitors have deserted it for the Bournemouth sands.

The change from coast to inland scenery, which a few minutes' walk may show, is among the strangest features of a visit to the forest shore. A journey of a few hundred yards along the channel of a little rushing stream, brings the visitor before a fine inland lake, sheltered on nearly every side by woods, and with deep fringes of sedge and reeds ; a perfect paradise for wild-fowl. In the winter this lake is the great resort of the duck, teal, and widgeon, which haunt the waters of the Solent, and come here for rest and quiet during the day, or in rough inclement weather. Beaulieu is almost unrivalled as a resort of wild-fowl. In hard weather wild swans haunt the quiet river, and geese, widgeon, and duck of all kinds are found in numbers, which recall the days of Colonel Hawker, the "father of wild-fowling," whose exploits on the Solent in pursuit of his favourite sport formed one of the earliest and best of British books on wild life. The flamingo which was shot on the river, and is now stuffed at Palace House, was clearly a wild bird ; its delicate white and pink feathers are

The Harbour, Lymington.

in perfect condition, free from any break or soiling, which is the certain mark of captivity in wild-fowl. Ospreys visit the river to feed on the mullet, trout, and salmon peel; and on the heaths beyond black-game are still found. It is said that these are gradually decreasing all over the forest, partly from the number of foxes, partly owing to the ravages of the oologists.

A Creek on the Beaulieu River.

As for the Beaulieu river, there is nothing like it in England, or rather like that part which begins at Beaulieu bridge, and falls into the Solent nine miles below. All the waters of those forest streams, those marshes, bogs, and swamps which you have crossed, leaped over, or sunk into in exploring the northern forest, are at last choked into a wide mere, which would be called a "broad" in Norfolk, by the narrowing of the valley and some ancient engineering

devices of the monks, and then, through a weir opposite the gate of the Palace, the fresh water from the forest above pours into the salt-water river below. Thus above the bridge are water-lilies, below it seaweed ; and from that point a beautiful broad salt river, rapid and sinuous, sweeps through oak woods, and meadows starred with flowers like the meads above Oxford at Rosamond's Bower, yet never quite foregoes that dignity which it borrows from the sea, whose doubled tides advance to fill it not twice, but four times in the twenty-four hours. Here then is a tidal river in which "low water" is but only a change for an hour or two in the landscape, a river whose bed shows only yellow gravel, or little sheets of saltings crowded by feeding birds, and backed by woods, where the banks are disfigured by no towing path or foul factories, and whose silent waters are broken not by steam-tugs and barges, but by fleets of shining swans. Little winding creeks run up into the woods, bordered by close-set rows of dark oak piles, and roofed by the clustered trees, creeks in which you might expect to find the "keel" of some prying Dane docked, while its blue-eyed crew crept up through the woods to spy out the land, or the hidden piraguas of the sea pirates who plundered Panama. Nor is this a mere fanciful suggestion from the scenery. War and opportunity lead to much the same results, whatever the date ; and here in 1704 Beaulieu Palace, nine miles up an English river, was fortified by John, Duke of Montagu, with a moat, walls and towers against the possible attack of French privateers,[1] a precaution which seems less strange than it might, in the light of the plunder of the Earl of Seafield's plate by Paul Jones, as to which a curious correspondence recently appeared in the newspapers.

The woods which run for miles along the river banks are perhaps equally ancient with the oldest in the forest—ancient that is as having always been wooded ground. But their character is wholly different. They are the woods of a manor, grown for profit, carefully tended, and full of the close and beautiful "sous bois," or underwood, which in the forest has disappeared, and left only the "haut bois," or timber trees.

1 Others account for the moat and turrets round Palace House by the taste for French architecture acquired by the duke in his residence abroad. Part of the woods were also laid out on the French system.

The woods on the opposite bank have that "carded" look, like curly hair combed, which sea-breezes give to trees as well as to sailors' locks; but except for this and the cries of the lapwings and the redshanks in the rushy meadow below there is nothing in the view which opens on leaving the wood to suggest that the water in front is anything but an inland lake. It winds between the hills exactly like a branch of Virginia Water. On the low ridge to the left is a square built village of

Beaulieu River at Buckler's Hard.

good old red brick, brown tiled houses; not so much a village indeed as a street, running at right angles to the river, and looking like a section of old Portsea cut away and set down in the woods. And that is exactly what it is; a fragment of the great arsenal, left high and dry by time on the shores of the Beaulieu river. Here, on the green slope where the cattle feed and children play, was built of New Forest oak, Nelson's ship the *Agamemnon*, 64, the ship which he was commanding when he lost his

right eye at the siege of Calvi, the ship which carried his flag in the battle of the Baltic, one of whose crew, at the battle of St. Vincent, tucked under his arm the swords of the Spanish officers as if gathering sticks for a faggot. Those whose boding fancy foresees a time when no sign will be left of the great industries of the North but burnt-out cinder heaps, should consider the history of Buckler's Hard.

In the middle of the last century, John Duke of Montagu, Lord of Beaulieu, and owner of the great sugar-island of St. Vincent, and inheritor of the rights of the Abbots of Beaulieu to a free harbour upon his river, determined to make a seaport at Buckler's Hard. It was a far-sighted scheme, in view of the American trade, which posterity has justified by the creation of modern Southampton. Grants of land at a nominal rent, and of timber delivered free, soon attracted shipbuilders to the spot, and in September, 1743, the *Surprise*, 24, the first battleship built on the river was launched. From that time till the end of the great war, the work grew and prospered. Frigates succeeded sloops, and battleships frigates, and each vessel after it left the slips, was taken round to be fitted and manned at Portsmouth. The *Surprise* went out to fight the French in May, 1750; the *Vigilant*, 64, 1,374 tons, in 1774; the *Hannibal*, 74, was launched in 1810. The *Agamemnon*, after carrying Lord Nelson through the battle of the Baltic, and taking her share in Trafalgar, was lost in Maldonado Bay in the River Plate in 1809; the *Indefatigable*, the *Illustrious*, the *Swiftsure*, line of battle-ships, and a whole fleet of frigates were launched at Buckler's Hard during the latter years of the war. Such was the skill of the builders and the resources of the place that a seventy-four gun ship was not longer than thirty months upon the stocks, though 2,000 oaks, 100 tons of wrought iron, and 30 tons of copper, were worked into her fabric. The whole of this great industry was created and directed by one man, Mr. Henry Adams, who carried it on for sixty years, and lived till the age of ninety-two. His sons succeeded him; and the ruin of Buckler's Hard was due, not to the failure of its resources, but to the deliberate action of the Admiralty. The Adamses were commissioned to build four ships at once, and for not delivering them by the date agreed on, were ruined by fines and litigation at the instance of the Government whom they served. Of their once prosperous yard, no sign remains but the houses they built, and four

grass-grown hollows in the shore which were the slipways of the battleships. In one of these, filled with water at high tide, lies the rotting skeleton of a wooden vessel, her stem and stern posts still upright, while from her back project the broken and distorted ribs, and bent bolts of copper. From a tree in the garden of what once was the home of the Adamses, there still waves, as if in mockery, a ragged Union Jack.

The squatters' houses which fringe the forest, are the subject of much amusing legend and odd domestic history. They illustrate the unsettled and lawless condition which prevailed in the district towards the end of the last century, better, perhaps, than any other feature of the forest.

A favourite site for their colonies was on the fringe of some great estate projecting into the Crown Forest. At Beaulieu, for instance, the boundary of the property is called the "Manor Bank." South and east of the Abbey it abuts on high flat open heaths; and there the line of division is a bank in the literal sense, a high rampart of earth separating the cultivated land and plantations of Beaulieu from the wild and open forest. To this bank, the cottages of the commoners and squatters cling like swallows' nests to the eaves. It is said that in the old days of encroachments, custom ruled, that if a house were once built, *roofed*, and a fire lit within, it was not in the power of the Crown to pull it down. Occupation, and not architecture, was the object of the squatters, and the game of house-building in the forest was soon played with a skill born of long practice, which baffled the spasmodic fits of energy on the part of the authorities. It reached such a stage of perfection that the art of building, roofing, putting in a chimney, and lighting a fire within the space of a single winter's night was at last attained; and the curl of smoke rising defiantly in the gray of a December morning was the signal that the squatter had triumphed, and that henceforth he was irremovable. Some of these little cabins are still used, though more commodious dwellings have been added to them. Others stand, or are tumbling down, in the gardens of later buildings. Fifty years of settled and prosperous occupation have not given them the complacency of the humdrum cottage. They never quite lose the hasty, half-defiant look which is their birthmark, though their present owners enjoy a degree of security, independence, and general goodwill, which their honourable and industrious lives fully justify. The ancient contrast of the life within

and without the "pale," is nowhere more picturesquely suggested than by the line of old cottages at "Hill Top," at the edge of Beaulieu Heath. The cottages are all set in narrow strips of garden, won from the heath. These bits of ground are now fertile and well cultivated. The houses themselves present an odd contrast of original poverty and present comfort. In structure they are, for the most part, of the roughest, and by no means most durable order. Some are of one story, some of two. The walls of all, or nearly all, are of yellow clay, something like the "cob" or "clay-lump" cottages and barns of South Devon. The roofs are straw-thatch, though in some this has been replaced by slate. The material of the walls seems hardly adequate to support two stories, for in many the wall bends inwards, and the lattice windows, and wooden frames seem to have taken kindly to the curvature. In some of the gardens the original house, which gave the "claim" to the land, still remains, a kind of "doll's house," which was enough to support the legal fiction of occupation. Most of the cottages have little pony-stables, piggeries, and wood-stacks attached, and though the exterior is humble and sometimes dilapidated, a glance at the interior gives every evidence of comfort and good living. The rooms are well and substantially furnished, with abundance of brightly kept household gear. There are flowers in the windows, pretty curtains and blinds, and the small and pleasing evidences of a mind so far free from the hardships of life as to find time for the enjoyment of its minor amenities. Above all the children are healthy, well dressed, and in many cases of singular beauty. There is one type which seems common in these cottages on the high uplands of the forest, gray eyes with dark lashes, small regular features, and a complexion of the most delicate pink and white, not the common cherry-cheeked complexion of rustic good looks, but of a far purer and more refined order, which seems as characteristic of the children of the forest as their quiet and reserved demeanour.

Men living the life of these commoners, attract an amount of interest and sympathy which must have its root in an appeal to some widely diffused and common sentiment. They are not a numerous class, the owners of from one to twenty acres being about 580. But these only hold $\frac{1}{26}$th part of the land entitled to rights of common, which are always attached to some particular house or piece of land. These are let by the

great proprietors to tenants who pay rent both for houses, land and forest rights, and make the same use of them as is done by the small freeholders. Both are an extremely honest, industrious and independent class of men, among whom theft is unknown, and drunkenness and improvidence extremely rare.

The existence of both is dependent upon the forest rights which they enjoy, the nature of which is better ascertained than their origin. In the case of many holdings the title is extremely ancient, in others a claim to ownership made by a squatter has probably been followed by a concession of common rights. Their present extent is very carefully defined. The first and most important is the right of pasture for all kinds of cattle but goats and sheep, except in the case of the owners of the Manors of Beaulieu and Brockenhurst. 5,469 cattle were turned out in the forest by commoners in the year 1892. The second is the "common of mast," or right of feeding hogs, otherwise called "pannage"; and this is so valuable that in a good acorn year each pig run in the forest is said to increase ten shillings in value, without cost to the owner.

"Pannage time" lasts, properly speaking, from September 25th to November 22nd; but though the Crown has the right to impound pigs found in the forest at other times, this rule is seldom enforced. When there are no nuts and acorns, New Forest pigs *graze* almost like cattle, cropping the grass with their teeth. Formerly they must have been the most characteristic animal of the forest, after the deer. Cobbett, on his ride to Beaulieu from Lyndhurst, says: "Of pigs this day we saw many, many thousand. I should think we saw at least a hundred hogs to one deer. I stopped at one time and counted the hogs and pigs just round me, and they amounted to 140, all within fifty or sixty yards of my horse."

The gathering of the pigs in "pannage time" was until recently one of the most complete survivals of Saxon days known in this country. The swineherd received from each commoner the pigs he wished fatted, with a small payment for each animal. A convenient place had been previously selected for a rough sty, where there was plenty of beech-mast, acorns, and water. "In Bolderwood Walk," says Mr. Rogers, author of the "Guide to the New Forest," "there were many favourite localities, as it contained the greatest number of beech trees. When the spot was

Herding Swine in the New Forest.

reached by the collected hogs, they were generally tired by their long journey, but an abundant supper was provided for them, and they woke up next day refreshed by a good sleep." This thoughtful provision for the pigs' comfort is characteristic of the high respect in which the friendly forest pig is held by its owner. "Plenty of food was then given them for breakfast, the 'herd' meanwhile blowing his horn; after which they had a little liberty, a few old 'pannage hogs' accompanying them as

Highcliffe.

leaders. They usually did not want to stray far, as food was very abundant, and in the evening were called by the horn, and fed as before. After two or three days they were as obedient as possible, and would assemble at any time on hearing the signal."

The old-fashioned, wild-looking, rust-coloured pig seems to have disappeared from the forest, and good black modern swine have replaced them. But they take very kindly to the life, and no one can know what an intelligent, cleanly animal the pig is by nature till he has seen him roaming half wild among the big trees, and apparently by common

consent, the leader in all the daily movements for food, shelter, water, of the mixed herd of cows, ponies, and donkeys with which he associates.

There are two minor common rights, probably very ancient, both of which are much prized by their possessors. They confer the right of fuel on the cottages to which they are attached. One is the right of "Turbary," or cutting turf on the heaths, the other that of "Estovers" or fuel. The turf right is not much used, except by the forest commoners; and while stick gathering is so easy in the wooded parts of the forest a poor man need never want small fuel. The rights of "Estover" are supposed to date from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who enacted that "no inhabiters of any house builded since the beginning of the Queen Majesty's reign that now is, shall be allowed any wood in the same forest to be burnt or expended therein." This right was much abused, as whole trees of oak and beech were assigned, for the right now applies to the timber of the hard-wood trees. This is now supplied from the "waste of the forest," and by some curious result of the drawing of recent acts, not from the inclosed young plantations, but from the old woods of the Stuarts or Elizabeth. The right is, however, being bought up by the Crown when practicable, and the number of loads is reduced from 800 to 367.

The future of these ancient woods is a matter of some concern to those who are intrusted with the management of the forest. It is feared that as the old trees die there will be few or no young trees to replace them, as the greater number are destroyed by the cattle when saplings. Meantime the 20,000 acres of Crown plantations are growing up to take their place, and as these are thrown open, the area covered with timber trees will increase instead of diminishing. Meantime, when frost and storm have widened the breaches in the Tudor woods, portions can be inclosed from time to time for natural reproduction and the preservation of that balance of wood, heath, swamp and pasture which makes the scenery of the New Forest unique among the beauties of England.

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THE ISLE OF WIGHT

CHAPTER I

YARMOUTH AND THE "ISLE OF FRESHWATER"

The "King of the Isle of Wight"—The island a separate region, politically and geographically—Its early "Lords"—Repeated French invasions—Its gallant resistance—Its towns burnt—Their recovery after the fortification of the island by Henry VIII.—How Henry VIII. obtained the money for this—The melancholy history of Yarmouth—Its Castle—Revival of the town—Its present condition—Lord Holmes—The "Isle of Freshwater"—Its coast and cliffs—A visit to the seafowl in the Freshwater cliffs—Totland Bay—Alum Bay—The Needles—Scratchell's Bay—The great precipices—Number of rock-fowl—A cragsman on the cliff face.

When Henry VI., with his own hands, crowned Henry Beauchamp Duke of Warwick, "King of the Isle of Wight," he was not so mad as is commonly believed. For though, as my Lord Coke observed in his *Institutes*, the king has no power to transfer the sovereignty of any part of his dominions, the Isle of Wight seems marked out, both by its position and history, for separate and peculiar consideration. It is the only part of England which has again and again been devastated by foreign invasion. There alone, on British soil, are towns and ports to which the population has never fully returned after their homes were sacked and burned by French and Spanish soldiers. The islanders, on the other hand, have more than once rallied and repulsed their invaders unaided, and for centuries maintained a separate military organisation, which often baffled such attempts at the moment of disembarkation.

Whether held by hereditary petty sovereigns, as it was until the days of Edward I., or governed by wardens and captains nominated by the Crown,

the island has always enjoyed in some sort a peculiar form of government, and its recent recognition as a separate county is justified on all grounds, political and historical, as well as geographical. William the Conqueror granted the island to William FitzOsborne, "to be held as freely as he himself held the realm of England." After a brief period of forfeiture, the first of a series of new "lords" was found in the person of Richard de Redvers, Earl of Devon, to whom the island was granted by Henry I., and in whose family it remained until the last of his descendants, the Lady Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Albemarle and Devon, Lady of the Isle of Wight, and Chamberlain of the Exchequer of England, after the strongest, and as her enemies alleged, the most arbitrary reign of any of her family, was on her deathbed induced to convey the island to Edward I. for the sum of 6,000 marks, a sum computed by Sir R. Worsley, in 1781, to be equal to 60,000 pounds of our money. The resolute countess would not part with her property until she knew herself to be almost *in extremis*, and then voluntarily ordered the deed to be prepared, sent her woman for her great seal, and delivered seisin of the island to the king by handing to the Bishop of Durham, who acted for Edward I., a pair of gloves which she held in her hand. She then signed her will, was shrived by her confessor, and died between midnight and morning.

The unity of "The Wight" was not lost by this change of authority from the "lords" to the Crown. Constant reprisals by French fleets for English invasions, levies *en masse* of the islanders under their wardens or captains, sometimes to do battle at the water's edge, sometimes to rally in Carisbrook Castle as a last city of refuge, taught them to rely on themselves for the right to live, from the days of Richard II. to the last French descent two years before the death of Henry VIII. It was not till the reign of the Stuarts that the resident great families began to build the fine old manor houses which, like Yaverland, Knighton, and Mottstone, are now among the most ancient buildings in the island, and with the notable exception of Carisbrook Castle and some of the churches, it may be said that every town and building in the island has grown up under the protection of the forts with which Henry VIII. surrounded its coast. The economic results of the confiscation of the property of the Church by Henry VIII. are one of the puzzles of Tudor finance. The disendowment of the monasteries, when the

enormous estates of the larger foundations were all thrown into the market together, must have reduced the price of land to a minimum, and given the least margin of profit to the Crown. The nobles and merchants who bought the abbey lands made good bargains, and the king, representing the State, made bad ones. Still, the sums of ready money so made must have been very large, and it is not easy to discover what became of it. The statement made by historians is that with part of the sums so raised the king endowed six new bishops' sees, and that part was spent on the fortification of the coast. The latter project sounds rather modern in conception, and no one seems to have taken particular trouble to inquire how far it was carried into effect. As a matter of fact the scheme was a patriotic and statesmanlike idea, and was executed on a scale which, considering the times, was both costly and complete. The sufferings of the Isle of Wight from the pirate forays of the French were the object-lesson which impressed the necessity for this measure on Henry VIII. and his advisers, and though the whole scheme of coast defence was applied far more elaborately to the mainland shore by the construction and armament with cannon of the castles of Deal, Walmer, Southsea, Calshot, and Hurst, and the fortification with artillery of Dartmouth and Plymouth, the good results in the case of the Isle of Wight are more easily shown. The apologists for Henry VIII. might instance the case of the ancient port of Yarmouth, at the mouth of the estuary which cuts off the "Isle of Freshwater" on the south from the centre of the island. It stands at the narrowest point of the Solent channel, opposite Hurst Castle, exposed to the attacks of any squadron approaching round the Needles.

In 1277 it was entirely burnt by the French. From that date the unfortunate little town was marked out by the French as the most convenient spot for reprisals on the English coast. It seems to have ceased to exist for a time, actually and politically. In the reign of Edward I. it sent a member to Parliament, but the privilege is said to have been suspended till the days of Elizabeth. This was not the case. It was too poor to *pay* its member's expenses. In Sir John Oglander's MS. the following note occurs: "Yarmouth is the ancientest borough town that sendeth burgesses to the Parliament for our island . . . . But it may be through poverty, as not being able to undergo the charge

of sending burgesses (for all then maintained the burgesses), they lost their privileges."

The last attack made on Yarmouth by the French was in 1524, when they sacked and burnt the town, and carried off the church bells to Cherbourg, where they are said still to be kept, with the name "Yarmouth" legible on the metal. But by 1537 the king's engineers completed their new castle for the defence of Yarmouth. Church property was applied to this object in a very practical manner. Like the fortresses of Hurst and Calshot, across the water, it was built from the hewn stones of Beaulieu Abbey Church, and remains, in perfect structural repair, the most interesting of the earliest fortifications built in England for the defence of towns by artillery. It was called a "block-house," but was far larger and more formidable than the name suggests. In front was a square stone platform, mounted with eight large cannon to command the sea. This portion looks like a modern fort; but the quarters behind it for the men and officers are picturesque stone Tudor houses, with carved finials and corbels, and with remains of others of Elizabeth's time, built of brick, not unlike some of the minor offices in Hampton Court. The back of the fort is again severely practical, containing a well-built vaulted powder magazine, and the garrison kitchen, with a huge fireplace, and "lifts" to send the food up to the men's quarters above. On the east side is a finely carved Royal Arms, supported, not by the lion and unicorn, but by the lion and griffin. The whole building is an interesting mixture of feudalism, Tudorism, and modernism. Its erection marked the end of French invasions of the island. The town grew up again under cover of its guns, and by the time of James I. had so increased that he had granted it a charter and a corporation. In this charter it is stated that "Since the building of the castle the town is better inhabited than before, and that the Mayor and Burgesses, esteeming the charters before granted them insufficient to authorise them in using their liberties and immunities, had petitioned the king to make and new create them a body politic and corporate." This the king did, and Charles II. presented the corporation with a fine silver-gilt mace and seal. This, with the ancient charters, and a curious emblem in the form of a large glove fixed on a pole, which was set up for two days during a fair held on St. James's Day, to indicate that for

Yarmouth. From a drawing by R. Serle.

that time no one should on any account be committed to prison, are all that remains to attest the ancient state of the corporation. The existence of the tiny borough was denounced in Parliament, and this picturesque survival has been turned into a modern "town trust," though the old municipal insignia are still preserved.

Close by the Castle is the fine house formerly used by the Governor of the island. It is a fine example of an early Stuart mansion, panelled throughout, and with a beautiful central staircase, with the landings laid in parquet, perhaps one of the oldest examples of this kind of flooring. Lord Holmes, the conqueror of New Amsterdam, from whose captures of Guinea Gold the first guineas were coined, lived in that house, after he was made Governor of the Isle of Wight by Charles II. In the church, which, like the rest of the town, was rebuilt under the protection of the Castle, is Holmes's monument. It is said to have been part of the prize cargo of a French ship captured by him, and to have been intended as a statue of Louis XIV. of France. While it was being taken in an unfinished state to France, for the head to be modelled from the august features of the "Roi Soleil," it was taken by one of Holmes's ships. Whether this be true or not, the present head is probably a very careful, and is certainly a very spirited, portrait of the piratical Irishman, who, after serving Charles I., the French, the Germans, and the Dutch, conquered New York for England. The harsh, imperious features are chiselled with wonderful vigour and force, shaded by the Admiral's hat of the Restoration—half-cocked hat, half-plumed helmet—an interesting example of ancient naval costume.

It is said that seven churches were burnt by the French. Modern investigation reduces the number to four, one having been on the site of the Castle, and one in Fort Street. The writer was taken into a small house in this street, where a boatman and his family were having tea, and shown, in the wall of the little parlour, two low ancient pillars, *papered* over, which had formed the doorway of the old church or chapel, and were now in the party-wall of the house. Iron shot, from 4 lb. to 9 lb. weight, recently picked up at the back of the modern town, are probably relics of the French bombardment in 1524. The picturesqueness of this little town, set at the mouth of the Yar estuary, with its miniature quay, little ships, fortress, "palace," and church, is

not less than its interest as an historical object-lesson. From the west the river is crossed by long narrow bridges and causeways, leading to the castle and the quay. The estuary itself is not the least beautiful part of the whole, and from its correspondence, not only in name but in form, with the river which cuts off the down and village of Bembridge from the centre of the island at the east corner, is a very rare and curious instance of that occasional symmetry in physical geography which Herodotus imagined was so far a law of nature that the course of the Nile in Africa ought to conform to that of the Danube in Europe. Each river has the same name, the "Yar." Each runs from south to north, and each cuts off a high chalk down, and incloses a territory almost exactly similar in geographical features.

The Freshwater Down on the west exactly corresponds to the Bembridge Down on the east, the long precipice of Freshwater "Whitecliff" with Bembridge "Whitecliff," Alum Bay and its sands with Whitecliff Bay and its sands, the beds being almost identical, though at Bembridge the colours are less vivid, while the two peninsulas are bounded on the north-east and north-west respectively by wide estuaries. The reclamation of Brading Haven, and the embanking of the eastern river Yar have somewhat altered the former lines. A map of the island, published in 1610, shows the ancient conditions very clearly. The eastern peninsula is there called the *Isle of Bembridge*, the western the *Isle of Freshwater;* and twelve years later it was proposed to make the latter into a real island by cutting a trench to the sea at Freshwater Gate, and to fortify it as a refuge and citadel in case of an invasion.

Either of these portions might serve as an epitome of the general scenery and character of the whole island, containing, as they do, examples of the high downs, chalk precipices, estuaries and composite cliffs, and lovely views of sea, land, and Solent-stream. Yet the differences are sufficient to make each of these peninsulas worth separate study. Take, for instance, the estuaries of the eastern and western Yar Rivers. The former has recently been reclaimed in anticipation of the work of Nature. The estuary of the western Yar is in great part already recovered from the sea by natural processes. The little river which formed the valley rises within a few yards of the southern

The Solent, from the Isle of Wight.

sea, at Freshwater Gate, but turning its back on the waters of the channel, flows due north towards the Solent. As its whole course is less than four miles, with a very gradual fall, it is open to the tide, and becomes a salt-water estuary within half a mile of its source. But the slob-lands on either side are rapidly being converted into firm ground. Part is covered with rough sedge-grass, which, except at high tides, is never under water. The wetter parts are thick beds of reeds, like those seen by the Norfolk Broads, between whose roots the decay of water plants is rapidly forming soil. Beyond this are squashy meadows, and outside these again rich grass lands. Looking up the estuary at sunset the scene across this mixed area of water and land is singularly rich in colour. The sunset clouds are painted again in crimson and gold on violet pools and windings of the river, and these are set and bordered with masses of yellow reeds. On either side lie the low hills, and at the head of the estuary the long aisles and tower of Freshwater Church, backed by the lofty ridge of Freshwater Down and Beacon. The gap called Freshwater Gate separates this down on the west from the Afton Down on the right. Between these lies the little bay, with the rounded shoulders of the down on either side, and the white chalk precipices rising in curve above curve, till they swing backwards towards the crowning heights of the Beacon Hill on the right, and Chale Bay on the left. Under the great down lies the home for so many years of Lord Tennyson, and between the western precipice of Scratchell's Bay and Yarmouth are the Needles, Alum Bay, and Totland Bay, making with the Freshwater Cliffs themselves perhaps the finest and most representative line of cliff scenery on the English coasts.

A visit to the seafowl colony in Freshwater Cliffs at daybreak is an island experience never forgotten. Early rising is essential for this form of morning call. On the last occasion on which the writer left Totland Bay to visit the seafowls' home the sun had not yet topped the cliffs, and the waters of the tiny bay were lying still and gray in the morning light. The crews of the small yachts moored off the bay were still asleep, the lights were not yet out in the lanterns on the masts, and were shining like dying stars. The mist was curling round the hollows above the cliffs, and still hid the sides of Freshwater Down. All the long coast line of the New Forest was hidden by a fog-bank,

and the island fortress of Hurst Castle rising above the sea opposite was the only object visible beyond the narrow circle of the bay.

As the oars struck the water the first sunbeams streamed from over the cliff behind, and sent a long beam of light across the Solent. The batteries and lighthouse of Hurst flushed into rosy pink, and the southern chalk wall of Alum Bay, the Needles, and the Needles light were touched by the sun. The beams caught all the lines and mould-

Smugglers at Freshwater Cave. From an old print.

ings of the chalk, the gray haze "dislimbed" and revealed the structure of the rocks and precipice. At sunset the brilliant sand-cliffs at the bottom of Alum Bay are the natural feature which most attracts the eye. At sunrise these are in shadow, and the dominant note is struck by the chalk precipice which forms three-quarters of the bay, and by the jagged outline of the Needles. The rock to which these first owed their name has disappeared. It was a sharp spine of

chalk, nearly 100 feet in height, which fell in 1764. It is probable that it was struck by lightning, just as the extreme point of the mainland cliff was recently shattered in a midnight thunderstorm and now lies in ruins on the beach. But three of the rocks remain, and the front edge of the main cliff is so similar in structure that it must in time become separated and form a fourth rock in the chain. Seen from the north the Needles and the parent cliff are like the lower jawbone of some sea monster, with the teeth awash. Nearer this resemblance increases, for the rocks do not rise squarely from their bases, but slope to a cutting edge. Between the inner rock and the cliff lies the narrow gate which leads, by one of the sudden changes only known in coast scenery, and rare even there, from the bright colours and soft outlines of Alum Bay to the grandest chalk precipice of Southern England. The Needle rocks are a kind of *propylæum* to the front of this cliff temple. As we approached the water gate between the chalk pillars, the bell of the lighthouse tolled like the morning angelus, echoing softly from rock to cliff, and on the gentle swell the boat slipped through the narrow channel and floated under the face of the highest precipice of the island. The cliff at Scratchell's Bay rises to a height of 640 feet from the water's edge, incurved, but with the section of the down itself, which is here cut across. Hence the centre of the precipice is its highest point. The whole face of the chalk is marked with regular diagonal lines of black flint. The face is hollowed for a height of nearly 200 feet from the beach, and this recess appears, when the visitor is standing below and looking seawards or skywards, as an enormous Norman arch, cut clear in the chalk against the sky. From the southern side of the bay the "Main Bench" cliff runs at an angle to the south-east. This is the main home of the sea-fowl. The chalk here has a different exposure and appears like rough concrete, "weathered" and stained in the softest tints of yellow, gray, and pink. The foot is blackened by seaweed and surge, and divided by fissures into rectangular blocks like the base of some gigantic wall.

The number of the rock-fowl, though very great, seems to have impressed most visitors to the precipices more than it did the present writer. The cliff itself is so huge that it is not in reason to suppose that its face could be "covered" with the birds, like the top of the

pinnacle rock at the Farne Islands. From Sun Corner along the "Main Bench" to the Beacon at Freshwater, the chalk wall continues at a height greater than that of the cross on St. Paul's Cathedral. The top is often veiled in mist, and the impression of height, expanse, and vastness so given baffles description. It seems to reach literally from sea to sky, and the puffins, razor-bills, and guillemots on the higher ledges, or sitting in rows in the niches and crevices, look like strings of little black and white beads stretched row below row across the chalk. The noise and cries which come from the cliff are made by the gulls, the most vociferous of all sea-fowl. These are dotted all over the slopes of turf and samphire, on the lower parts of the precipice, and scream, laugh, and chatter incessantly; while the true rock-fowl are mute until they feel some common sense of danger. Between Sun Corner and Pepper Rock is the main nesting place of the puffins and guillemots, which sit on their lofty ledges quite motionless and unconcerned until the visitor rows in close to the cliff. Then, after turning their heads towards each other like wooden puppets, a proceeding which, as seen through the glasses, produces a most comical effect as the movement passes on from line to line of the birds, some one apparently calls for "three groans for the man in the boat," and the whole concourse groan in chorus like a well-drilled political meeting. Then they fly downwards to the sea, first singly, then in flocks, and collect in little groups upon the water, though this may soon be covered with the birds without any apparent diminution in the upper ranks upon the cliff, where, safe from all danger and almost out of hearing of the waves, they sit and gaze at the intruders below.

On the water the razor-bills and puffins are so tame that they will let the boat run within a dozen yards of them. Then the whole flock disappear without sound and almost without moving the surface of the water, and presently emerge like corks at a little distance. The razor-bills swim with their beaks tilted upwards and their tails low in the water, which gives them a saucy independent air, quite unlike that of any other bird. The puffins seem all head and beak, and when they rise from the water to fly look like tin birds worked by machinery. Their wide bills, of the brightest red, blue, and yellow, hard plumage, and narrow wings are balanced by their red legs and feet, which they stick

The Needles from Alum Bay. By R. Serle.

out at the widest possible angle from the line of their bodies as soon as they leave the water.

We had scarcely finished our interview with these interesting members of Neptune's poultry yard when a cloud of gulls flew out of the cliff, puffins and guillemots rushed past in hundreds, and the whole colony were thrown into sudden agitation, very different from the complacency with which they had viewed our approach in the boat. The cause was soon

The Needles from Scratchell's Bay. From a photograph by Messrs. F. Frith & Co.

obvious. Descending from the brow of the cliff, on a rope hardly visible in the mist which wrapped the summit, was the figure of a man, while two others were indistinctly seen easing the rope downward through what appeared to be a block fastened to a post.

The climber descended some 250 feet till he came to a grass slope, which a few minutes before had been dotted with gulls. There he slipped his leg out of the loop in which he had been sitting, and passing the double cord by which he had been lowered over his left arm, he walked

along the slope, stooping and picking up the gulls' eggs, which he put into a bag hanging across his chest. Above one end of the turf slope was a crack in the cliff in which a line of guillemots had been sitting. Scrambling up to this he took the eggs one by one, with as little apparent hurry as if he had been taking teacups from a shelf, and then walking back to the spot at which he had descended was hauled up to the summit, and, after removing the tackle from above, disappeared with his companions behind the brow. The adventure did not last more than ten minutes, and was evidently considered nothing unusual either by the climber or by the boatmen below.

CHAPTER II

THE CENTRAL ISLAND

Carisbrook Castle—An object-lesson in the evolution of a fortress—Successive adaptations of defence from the Celtic mound to the fortification by Genoballa, engineer of the citadel of Antwerp, to resist the Armada—Its consequent importance—Arrival and captivity of Charles I.—Sir John Oglander's account—The attempts to escape—Vigilance of Oliver Cromwell—Carisbrook village—Francheville, or Newtown—Totally destroyed by the French—Newport—Its history and burning by the French—The French general shot by Petre de Haynoe with his silver bow—Parkhurst Forest—The Medina and its likeness to the Orwell—The yachts in the Medina—Their number—Cowes—Modern yacht racing—Single-handed yachts—West Cowes Castle—Quarr Abbey—Poaching Monks—Osborne—The Queen's gardens and woods.

When that distinguished French architect and antiquary, M. Viollet le Duc, wrote his *History of a Fortress*, he was probably unacquainted with Carisbrook Castle. In that delightful book, the succession of defences applied to the protection of a natural site for a fortress—very similar to that of Carisbrook—is set out with the most graphic detail, as well as great technical and historical knowledge, from the days of the primitive earth-camp, through the successive adaptations of defence to baffle the means of attack by Romans, Franks, Burgundians, and English invaders, down to the siege by the Allies in 1811, and that by the Prussians in 1870. Carisbrook Castle is probably the most perfect example in England of the evolution of a fortress, so considered. Its site marks it as the natural citadel of the island. In it every modification of the defence may be traced in historical sequence, from the primitive British camp of refuge to the mathematically perfect bastioned *enceinte* constructed after the use of artillery in sieges was fully developed, by Genoballa, the engineer of the fortress of Antwerp, who deserted from the Spaniards to take service under Queen Elizabeth, and fortified the castle against the coming invasion of the Armada. The historic growth

of the fortress is evident almost at sight, and can be verified at each step by the known records of the island.

Stripped of every wall and tower the original Celtic earthwork would stand as a reproduction of those which crown most of the great chalk hills, from Winchester to Uffington Castle on the White Horse Hill. Whit-gar, nephew of Cedric the Saxon, who built the town on the hill opposite, stormed the old camp, and later, in due course, the whole island was granted by the Conqueror to William Fitz-Osborne, Marshal

Carisbrook Castle. After Luke Clennell.

of the Norman Army at the Battle of Hastings. The Norman noble at once built the centre and symbol of feudal ownership, the castle keep, at the corner of the centre rampart, where it stood raised on the top of the ancient earth-mound, just as the Round Tower of Windsor stood alone in the days of Rufus. Shortly after a high wall was run round the rest of the Celtic rampart, following its outline as it stood, and in 1086, according to the Doomsday Book, the area of the castle grounds was twenty-six acres; for outside, and to the east of the walls

was a subsidiary Celtic camp, which was probably inclosed by barriers, though not walled. To the castle, the Conqueror summoned his half-brother, Odo of Bayeux, Archbishop of Canterbury and Earl of Kent, just as he was preparing to leave England as a candidate for the Popedom, and sentenced him to imprisonment, not as he acutely remarked, as Archbishop of Canterbury, but as the presumptuous "Earl of Kent."

No change in the defences seems to have been made until Baldwin de Redvers, who was holding the castle for the Empress Matilda, had to yield because the well in the keep ran dry. Later he dug the famous well of Carisbrook. The last of his descendants, Isabella de Fortibus, added to the buildings in the court, but not to the defences, which remained much as they were until the Wars of the Roses. Then Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, brother of Edward IV.'s Queen, brought the fortifications up to the needs of his day, by building the great entrance gate. It is still almost perfect, and a complete example of purely military architecture as then understood. Its proportions are so picturesque and ornamental that its adaptation to its purpose is sometimes forgotten. The two side-towers, pierced for hand-guns, as well as arrows, flank the whole of the straight western line of wall in addition to defending the gateway itself, the towers having been built on to the existing gate, which brings them well in front of the old wall. Between the towers, and over the gate, is a machicolated gallery, from the open base of which missiles or boiling water could be discharged vertically upon the heads of the stormers. A portcullis, and strong double doors, the latter still standing, completed this carefully thought-out defence. Henry VIII., fearing for the island in his French wars, then made the first modification for the use of cannon. At the south, east, and north-east corners, the old wall was cleverly extended into small bastions, called "knights," in each of which cannon were mounted, and the castle was to that extent modernised. The list of defensive implements kept in the castle at this time is preserved, and is a curious relic of the transition period in the art of war. The armament of the castle was "5 pieces of iron ordnance, 520 shot, 23 double barrels and 3 firkins of powder; 140 hackbuts; 59 chests of arrows; 3 barrels of bowstrings; 500 morris pikes, javelins, and bills." But the final adaptation of the

fortress to the new way of war was made by order of Queen Elizabeth. The castle, with its keep, walls, and "knights," was kept as a central citadel, but surrounded by a complete parallelogram of bastioned defences, still in perfect preservation, and adapted to the site with the skill of a master hand, trained in the wars of the Low Countries and Italy—the highest school of the military art. Genoballa inclosed the whole hill-top, outside the Celtic ramparts, by a regular pentagonal wall, having a bastion at each corner mounted with cannon, outworks in the moat to cover the curtains, and solid stone ramparts. The lower part of the Celtic works he cleverly adapted as a second line of defence on the east side, paring them into the shape of bastions, and forming what is called a "hornwork," with guns mounted at the corners. The whole design is very little inferior to the later system perfected by Vauban, and is a unique instance in this country of such a fortification.

It was this almost impregnable fortress of which Colonel Robert Hammond had charge, when Charles I. arrived as an unbidden guest. Its importance to the Parliament may be better understood from the foregoing description than it was by ordinary Englishmen even at that day, when Andrew Marvel himself clearly understood it to be a mere feudal castle when he speaks of "Carisbrooke's narrow case." If Colonel Hammond and the islanders had joined him, Charles might have held Carisbrook with some hopes of success, while he played off the Parliament against the army. Hence the extreme anxiety shown in Cromwell's letters to "Dear Robin," as he calls Colonel Hammond, the Governor of Carisbrook. But Hammond was staunch and prudent, and the town of Newport was so wholly for the Parliament as to neutralise the personal loyalty to the king of the leading families in the island.

Sir John Oglander, of Nunwell, whose family had held that estate in lineal descent, as he remarks in his quaint diary, since the days of Henry I., has left, among the interesting personal experiences with which his notes are filled, an account of the reception of the king in the island. Charles was evidently very much broken in spirit. His last visit to the island had been paid to review his troops before the expedition to Rochelle and the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham. He now appeared almost as a suppliant. "Sondaye morninge," writes Sir John Oglander, "att churche I heard a rumour that ye King wase that nyght, beinge ye

Entrance to Carisbrook Castle. From an engraving by T. Stowers, 1785.

14th of November, landed at Cows. I confesse I coold not beleeve itt, but att evening prayor ye same daye Sir Robert Dyllington sent his servant to mee to inform mee of his Maties coming into ye island, and that our governor, Col. Hammon, commanded mee and my sonn (as he had done all ye gentlemen of ye island) to meet him att Nuport ye nexte daye, being Mondaye, by nine in ye mornynge. Truly this news trobled mee very mutch : but on Mondaye mornynge I went to Nuport, where I found most of ye gentlemen of ye islande ; and not longe after Hammon came and he made a short speache to us, which as well as my olde memorie will give me leafe, wase thus, or to this purpose—Gentlemen, I beleeve it was as straunge to you as to mee to hear of his Maties comynge into this island. Hee informs mee necessitie broughte him hithor, and theyre weare a sorte of people neare Hampton Coorte (from whence he came) that had voted and were resolved to murder him (or woordes to that effect) ; and therefore soe privately he was forced to come awaye, and soe to thrust himself upon this island, hoping to bee here secure."

Colonel Hammond then stated his determination to secure the king's person, and the measures he had taken to guard the entrances to the island until he had an answer to an express which he had sent to Parliament. Sir Robert Dyllington on behalf of the gentlemen of the island then requested permission for them to visit the king, and "express their dewties to him," to which Hammond consented, remarking "truely I woold invite you all to dinner, had I anie entertaynments ; but truely I want extremely fowle for his Matie ; intimatinge thereby that he wanted ye gentlemen theyre assistance."

The king seems to have heard of this piece of vicarious begging on Hammond's part, for after receiving Sir John and the rest, and repeating his reasons for leaving Hampton Court, he added, "I desior not a drop moore of Christian bloude showlde bee spilt, neythor do I desior to bee chargeable to anye of you ; I shall not desior soe much as a capon from anye of you, my resolution in coming here being to bee secure till some happy accomodacion bee mayde."

Colonel Hammond's statement to the gentlemen of the island as to his ignorance of the king's intentions is irreconcilable with the accounts describing Colonel Hammond's visit to Charles at Titchfield near South-

ampton, at which he had given a guarded promise to receive and protect him in the island.

The king remained in the island from November 23rd, 1647, until November 29, 1648, when he was seized by the soldiers, exasperated by the outbreak of the "second civil war," and carried off to the lonely fortress of Hurst, and thence to London to be tried at Westminster.

With the exception of an interval after September 18th, 1648, in which he was allowed to reside at the Grammar School at Newport, during negotiations with the Parliament in the absence of the army, which was fighting in the north, the king was all this time a prisoner at Carisbrook, his confinement varying in rigour according as Parliament or the army had the control of affairs. The personal history of his confinement is given at immense length in the papers and writings of the time. Cromwell seems to have been supplied with information not accessible even to Hammond, constantly keeping the governor informed of attempts which had been, or were to be, made at rescue—just as Napoleon, at Paris, was able to warn his marshals in Spain of intrigues and plots which were going on in their own provinces. Hammond's first information of the attempt made by the king to escape from the castle on March 20th, 1648, was in a letter from Cromwell, written on April 6th. The king was then living in the centre of the castle court, in the building which is now the governor's house. Mr. Firebrace, the king's confidential attendant, had arranged with Mr. John Newland of Newport, Mr. Edward Worsley of Gatcombe, and Mr. Osborne, usher to the king, to have horses ready to take the king to the seaside, where he was to embark in a large boat. The king was to lower himself from the window and be met by Firebrace, who would see him across the court, over the wall at the back of the castle, and across the bowling green. Charles was physically utterly unfitted for enterprises of this kind. He made no experiments until the night for action came, and then found that he could not pass between the bars, a difficulty which Firebrace had foreseen and begged him to provide against by cutting a bar. Cromwell not only gave a correct account of this attempt, but foretold the method of the next in the following letter to Colonel Hammond :—

"Intelligence came to the hands of a very considerable person that

the king attempted to get out of his window and that he had a cord of silk with him whereby to slip down, but his breast was so big, the bar would not give him passage. This was done in one of the dark nights about a fortnight ago. . . . The guard that night had some quantity of wine with them. The same party assures us that there is *aqua fortis* gone down from London to remove that obstacle which hindered, and that the same design is to be put in execution the next dark night." Again in another

King Charles I.'s Window, Carisbrook Castle. By R. Serle.

letter, dated April 22nd, he writes, "The *aqua fortis* was spilt by the way by accident, but yesterday about four o'clock, a fat plain man carried to the king a hacker, which is an instrument made here on purpose to make the king's two knives, which he hath by him, cut as saws. The time assigned is May Day at night for the king's escape, but it may be sooner if opportunity serves."

Colonel Hammond acted on this information, so far as to remove the king to another set of rooms, built against the main wall of the castle,

with windows looking over the old scarp and moat, towards Carisbrook village. They were on the right of the main gate, and still remain, one being open, and the other, and smaller window, that from which the king was to make his second attempt, being blocked with masonry. The larger window, which was that of the king's sitting-room, was fitted with new bars, and a sentry was set below that of the bedroom. There, too, the bars were close, and the king, instructed by his perilous failure, cut one through with a saw, which he had made from a knife-blade, by means of the "hacker" referred to in Cromwell's letter. But the plot had been betrayed, and not only were the sentries below increased, but one Major Rolfe, a fanatical officer, was waiting armed with pistols to shoot him dead if he descended. Colonel Hammond had also placed an ambuscade to intercept Mr. Worsley and Mr. Osborne, who galloped past them and received their fire unhurt, owing to the darkness.

The country round the castle is probably little changed in appearance since the early days of Charles's captivity, when he was treated as a guest rather than as a prisoner, and allowed to visit Sir John Oglander and hunt in Parkhurst Forest. The pretty village of Carisbrook, with its fine church tower, stands on the hill opposite the castle, just as the church and town of Conisborough in Yorkshire cover a twin mound to that on which is the very similar castle of Conisborough, so well known to the readers of *Ivanhoe*. A bright trout stream, with its mill pond and water-wheel separates the two hills, and runs down to Newport to join the Medina. To follow this stream down from the ancient fortress to the modern capital of the island, and thence by the principal river to the principal port at Cowes is an expedition full of interest. By the Carisbrook stream above Newport, with its mill pools and ancient mills, is the pleasantest approach to the town; and the contrast of the tidal river into which the brook falls at a short distance below its springs is one of the many abrupt surprises in scenery which the island furnishes. The Medina creek runs right up between the houses, and the masts of the lighters and small coasters rise among the roofs of this inland town.

Newport is not the ancient capital of the island. Its rise, like the decay of Yarmouth, was caused by the French invasions. The original capital of the island was at Newtown, anciently called Francheville, which

stands, or rather stood, on an estuary between Yarmouth and Cowes. This was the natural port of the island in the days of the early Angevin kings, facing their harbour at Lymington, whither they came from their capital at Winchester, through the royal domain of the New Forest. Arrived at Newtown, the king found the best natural harbour in the island, with a depth of water sufficient to float a 500-ton ship, on the borders of another royal forest, that of Avington or Parkhurst, which stretched from

Newport. By John Fullwood.

the harbour of Newtown to the gates of Carisbrook. It is not flattering to English pride to know that this natural capital had to be deserted owing to foreign invasion. In the reign of Richard II. in 1377, the French burnt it to the ground, and though it was rebuilt, and called *Newtown*, it never recovered its prosperity ; nothing remains to show its former dignity except an ancient wooden town hall, and lanes and fields, which still retain the names of the streets and buildings which once stood upon them—High Street, Gold Street, Quay Street, and Draper's Alley.

There is no other instance in England of so complete a destruction of a town by foreign conquest. It remained a "rotten borough" after it ceased to exist as a town, and was represented by John Churchill—afterwards the Duke of Marlborough, and by Mr. Canning! Newport, though so near to Carisbrook, was also burnt by the French in the same invasion, and was for two years left utterly deserted. The French Armada seems to have landed at St. Helen's Point, almost opposite Southsea, at the eastern end of the island, and sacked and burnt every considerable place from thence to Yarmouth, with the exception of Carisbrook Castle itself. This was besieged, but the French general was shot, and the siege raised, as recorded by Sir John Oglander in the following quaint note, one of a series written on the ancient families of the island.

"The de Haynoes were Lords of Stenbury, when ye Ffrench had taken ye island, and beseyghed Caresbroke Castle. One Petrus de Haynoe came to Sir Hugh Tyrell, then Captayne of ye Island, and told him he woold undertake with his sillver bowe to kill ye Commander of ye ffrench, taking his tyme, for he had observed how nyghtes and morninges he came near ye Castle; which on leave he killed out of a loopehold on ye west syde of ye Castle, and by that meanes brought ye ffrench to take a composition of 2,000 markes to begone, and to doe no further harme; on which embassage one of ye Oglanders wass imployed and effected it." The French also exacted a promise that if they chose to return in a year's time the inhabitants were not to offer any resistance to their landing. But the French were also defeated, according to tradition, in an ambuscade set by Sir Hugh Tyrrel near the castle, at a place now called "Deadman's Lane." Newport was again burnt by the French in the reign of Edward IV.; but the houses are sufficiently good and old to make it a pretty old county town; there are many quaint cupolas and weather-vanes; good old brick houses with projecting upper windows; and in St. Thomas's Square one very fine house, now divided into shops, with deep cornices below the roof, carved window jambs, and a porch modelled like a shell over the door, like the ancient Fairfax house, now pulled down, at Putney, and with an appearance of antiquity far beyond anything else in the town.

Parkhurst Forest, which reaches from near Newport to the Newtown

estuary, is a very good example of what a national forest ought *not* to be, and of what the New Forest would have become had the old Act empowering its inclosure as a State timber farm not been modified. It is an ancient royal forest; but instead of remaining in its natural condition of a wild furze heath and woodland it is now a solid mass of timber, mainly oak and chestnut, viewless, and almost impenetrable except by the roads cut through it. If any one desires to know how dull a thousand acres of scientific plantation can be he need only spend an

Cowes. By John Fullwood.

hour in Parkhurst Forest. On the other hand it is an economic success. The whole of the land running from Parkhurst to Yarmouth is obviously poor, sour clay and gravel, bad for crops of any kind, and rapidly going out of cultivation, or cultivated in the poorest way. If it had all been planted fifty years ago it would now cost little and pay well. Now the land is a failure from every point of view, financial or picturesque. The tidal Medina river, which cuts the island in half in a straight line from Newport to Cowes, is singularly like the Suffolk Orwell,

Newport taking the place of Ipswich and Cowes of Harwich, the point of difference being that the land on either side is hilly down to the coast instead of gradually coming down to sea level.

The tide soon runs out and leaves the river bed a level lake of mud, from which cement is made in the only "factory" in the island. But the brigs and ketches lying among the fields, the old brick tide mill, many stories high, in which French prisoners used to be kept in the old war, and the fine timber which runs down from Whippingham church make the upper reaches picturesque enough. Lower the Medina is one vast storage for yachts. Their numbers are quite incredible; they lie in hundreds packed close together, from the 500-ton three-masted steam yacht to the half-rater for racing single-handed. Yachts never "die." They are scarcely ever lost at sea, or sold to be broken up, or burnt, or blown up. They are so well built that without such accidents they do not decay, and fashion, which has during the past twelve or fifteen years turned yachts into racing machines, in which owing to the constant improvements in rig and design the last constructed usually wins, has multiplied their number out of all proportion to the demand for them as mere private ships for living in and cruising. The depreciation in capital value of these hundreds of yachts laid up in the Medina, would, if ascertained, be some measure of the margin of income available for the gratification of the luxury of yacht-racing in this country.

Lately a more sensible view has prevailed, and small yacht racing, in which the owner sails his own boat and enjoys a contest of seamanship rather than of mechanical design has become the favourite amusement of the Solent. Lord Pembroke has given a brightly written account of this in the "Badminton" series. But yacht-racing on the large scale has made Cowes what it is, the brightest and daintiest of English ports. The pretty harbour full of yachts in commission, the ancient Tudor fort of West Cowes Castle—now the club house of the Royal Yacht squadron—and the modern East Cowes Castle on the opposite hill, make a beautiful approach to the old town. It is a port without commerce, dirt, or noise, whose only trade is that of providing the details, fittings, and equipment of the most luxurious playthings of the richest people in the world. Nothing on earth is quite so gloriously bright, smart, clean, and tidy as an English man-of-war. The harbour,

town, and yachts of Cowes are apparently all voluntarily devoted to the reproduction of this ideal as an end in itself.

The representation in miniature of the social and political life of mediæval England in the Isle of Wight, would not have been complete

West Cowes Castle. After Peter De Wint, 1818.

without the addition of one of the great religious foundations. This was supplied by the foundation of Quarr Abbey, by Baldwin de Redvers, Earl of Devon, Lord of the island, in the reign of Henry I. It was to the Cistercian order that the earl looked to serve the abbey which he founded, and in later reigns this great foundation rivalled the splendour

of Netley and Beaulieu Abbeys, the two great Cistercian houses which stood on the two estuaries of "Hampton" and Beaulieu on the opposite side of the Solent. The Abbots of Quarr became almost petty princes, and were frequently associated with the captains of the island in securing its defence from invasion. In 1340 the abbot was nominated sole warden by Edward III., and converted the abbey into a fortress. The whole precinct was surrounded by a strong wall, like that which incloses the ruins of Beaulieu, large enough to give a refuge to all the inhabitants of that part of the island. Access to the sea was by a fortified gate with portcullis defences, and a beacon tower was built to signal across the Solent the approach of danger. This sea-gate of the abbey, Ryde—then called "La Rye," and Cowes, were the only points from which boats were allowed to leave the island for the mainland. The French burnt Ryde, but the garrison of the Abbey seems to have been able to defend itself successfully. The Cistercians of Quarr were bound by the rules of their order to abstain from flesh; but like Chaucer's monk, they seem to have taken liberal views of their vows in the later days of the establishment, and

> "Recked not of that text a pulled hen,
> That saith that hunters been not holy men."

They poached the Manor of Ashey, and the record of their transgressions is kept in the rolls of the manor. It would be interesting to know how these "presentments" were viewed by the abbey authorities. Did they condone the clerical offence in consideration of the improvement in fare at the refectory table? Or were the poachers corrected by penance, vigils, and bread and water? In the rolls of another manor, we find that one Hardekyn, a clerk, was incorrigible. Rabbits were his temptation. He shot them over the warren fence with a bow and arrow. Thrice he was seen to do so—"iii. *cuniculos sagittis transfixit.*" "Three rabbits with arrows he transfixed." How did he account to the sacristan for their appearance at the common table?

"Ha, Brother Hardekyn, rabbit pie again? How is this?"

"*Domestici*—domestic or tame rabbits, if it please you, Master Sacristan. I have a dispensation, and am permitted to keep rabbits in my cell, and their increase is singularly blessed."

Infatuated Hardekyn! He would not be warned; he was taken

red-handed; put *in vincula.* Chains and prison were his lot till he threw himself in *misericordiam dominæ*, on the mercy of the Lady of the Manor.

The abbey has now almost as completely vanished as the records of its inhabitants. Parts of the wall of the precinct, a fragment of the abbot's kitchen, and of the guest house alone remain, converted into a house and farm buildings. The abbey church and all its subsidiary

Quarr Abbey. By John Fullwood.

buildings were pulled down by John Mills, a Southampton merchant, who bought it after its confiscation, and the material sold as building stone.

Those who are interested in the change of ideas in the matter of sites for houses will find matter for reflection in the contrast between the positions chosen by the builders of Quarr Abbey and Osborne respectively.

The builders of each were probably ahead of their time in their views

as to what constituted a desirable site for an establishment of the first order, both in size and from the social rank of its owners. But the builders of the abbey, like the builders of Osborne, had no thought, when first selecting their site, of choosing one suited for defence. Like other ecclesiastics, they enjoyed the rare privilege of making their house for convenience, not for safety, and they chose to place it in a valley sloping gently to the sea, sheltered on either side by low wooded hills, at the back by a higher ridge, watered by a brook, and having on one side an everlasting spring. Warmth, wood, water, and ready access to the Solent sea made this an ideal site, according to mediæval notions. Osborne, like Quarr Abbey, stands on an estate facing the Solent, and on that estate a similar site was available. But the house, or palace, for its design and dimensions are on the largest scale, is not placed in the shelter near the sea. It stands on the uplands at the head of the seaward valley. Space, air, and a wide view are advantages more in keeping with modern requirements than the quiet and warmth of the valley. The ruins of Quarr are seen as a surprise, just as Beaulieu Abbey is invisible until the edge of the valley is reached. The towers of Osborne are a landmark. Driving over the high land of Palmer's Hill, between Quarr Abbey and Cowes, the scene is almost a reproduction of that on the high land above the Orwell near Ipswich. The Medina takes the place of the Orwell, and a minor feature of resemblance is the careful farming of the Queen's estate of 8,000 acres, the large fields, the clipped thorn hedges, and the new plantations. Osborne is a fine instance of how a site can be *made* beautiful. Its height and the view of the Solent were the only features contributed by Nature. Human skill and taste have done the rest. The great Italian villa, with its yellow walls, terraces and towers, is surrounded at the back by timber exactly suited to its character—clumps of ilexes, groves of cork-trees, single cedars, deodars, and spreading Mediterranean pines. Among these are the indigenous hard-wood trees. But the principal idea has been to produce surroundings different to those of the common English mansion, and to make the most of the unusual and south European landscape.

The taste and care of the late Prince Consort are amply justified by the results. There is nothing in the south of England quite like the seaward view from Osborne terrace. The formal garden melts into wide

lawns dropping between the rounded sides of the valley. These are studded with clumps of arbutus, masses of rhododendrons, or pines, at a sufficient distance to break the lines without diminishing the sense of space. At the valley end the blue Solent fills the picture, framed on either side by sloping lines of wood.

CHAPTER III

THE UNDERCLIFF AND "BACK OF THE ISLAND"

The nature of the Undercliff region—Its recent discovery in the search for a climate—Its general features—Ventnor—St. Lawrence—Steephill Castle—Pelham woods—Change to desolation—St. Catharine's Point—Landslips—Yore Cliffs—Black Gang Chine—The nature of "chines"—Bonchurch—The Landslip—Shanklin Chute—View across Sandown Bay to Culver Cliffs—Why the "Undercliff" was not discovered earlier.

"THESE mountains," remarked a matter-of-fact tourist in the Italian lakes, "appear to have no *feet;*" by which was meant that the slope rises straight from the water, with none of the usual fringe of beach and *débris*. The Boniface down at Ventnor makes a nearer approach to this peculiarity of the Italian and Mediterranean mountains than any part of the English coast. The smooth grassy chalk down slopes at an angle almost too steep to climb, from a height of 800 feet almost to the edge of the sea. The top is so straight and level, the slope so regular and uniform, that it looks like an enormous earthwork rising from the sea. But before reaching the sea level the sloping chalk ceases, and gives place to a perpendicular face of broken stone, like the masonry scarp at the bottom of an earthen rampart. This continues for many miles, rising gradually to the west in the direction of St. Catharine's Point and Black Gang Chine, till it becomes a high rugged wall of sandstone, like one of the "scarrs" which jut out at the top of a Yorkshire moorside. From its summit the sloping hills and downs still rise. Hence its name, the *Undercliff*. Over it the earth constantly slides and topples in masses great and small, and by slow degrees has formed a shelf, now broad, now narrow, between the Undercliff and the sea. On the shelves, and against the face of this cliff below St. Boniface Down, the Ventnor people have built their houses, like the puffins and guillemots in the

Freshwater precipices, sheltered from all rough winds by the monster down above them. The "discovery" of Ventnor and the Undercliff only dates from the last fifty years, when Sir James Clark wrote, "It is a matter of surprise to me, after having fully examined that favoured spot, that the advantages which it possesses in so eminent a degree in point of shelter and position should have been so long overlooked in

Shore near Ventnor. After Peter De Wint.

a country like this, whose inhabitants have been traversing half the globe in search of a climate."

The search for a climate made Ventnor; but the beauty of the Undercliff is enough to satisfy the most robust traveller. This narrow irregular shelf, backed by the wall of cliff, has a double share of spring and catches the last breath of summer. Little rich meadows nestle under the crags between cliff and sea, woods and groves of ash, sycamore, beech, and maple cluster on the slopes, showing that form of beauty scarcely seen elsewhere in England, trees and foliage

outlined against a background of blue sea. This juxtaposition of trees and fertility, with cliff and sea, lasts for several miles west of Ventnor. Beyond Steephill Castle are narrow meadows at the foot of the crags; broken rocks crop out from turf which is rich with primroses and flowers; the cliff is hung with ivy and moss, maples and rowans grow from the crevices, as on a Scotch hillside, and in places the turf is studded with ancient thorns smothered with wild clematis. Above all this the rock pigeons and jackdaws swing out from the upper ledge of the cliff, and below is heard the suck and surge of the Channel sea. At St. Lawrence the timber is even finer. Springs break out from the cliff foot, and give the sight and sound of running water. Beyond the spring are Pelham woods, tall trees, mainly sycamores, full of nesting rooks, one of the few instances of a rookery by the sea.

The change from all this warmth and prettiness of the Undercliff to what Dr. Johnson would have described as "deformity and horror" is very sudden. The line of the cliffs trends more to the north-west beyond the village of Niton; the trees dwindle and disappear, the cliff wall above, now bare, corrugated, and weather-worn, mounts higher and higher, and on the left the evidences of recent landslips and disturbance of the surface increase. It is like the change from the vineyards of Etna to the region of invading lava, though water, not fire, has here been the destroying agent. At St. Catharine's Point all the prettiness has gone. Here at the most southern point of the island, where it juts furthest into the Channel waves, and where every ship passing up or down the sea-road by day sends news of its safety to London, the scenery is far more wild and forbidding than any presented by the giant chalk precipices east and west of the island. The profile of the point seen towards the west descends in "knees," from the down 600 feet above, to the point on which the most powerful lighthouse in the world warns ships from approaching the sunken rocks which extend from this broken and unquiet land beneath the surface of the sea. The "knees" are the cliff faces from which the land has slipped. Below each is an irregular slope of earth and rocks in such disorder and confusion as to produce a sense not only of irregularity but of ugliness. In places the "slip" is going on still. Here the ground looks as if a thousand navvies had been excavating a reservoir, or piling some huge embankment; rivers of half-

soaked mud, clay, and loam, turf detached and sliding on the surface, stones half embedded, and curiously coloured earths, poured down the hollows of the cliffs and slopes, are the evidences that the alterations in the level of land may be rapid and unexpected, without the need for any great "convulsion of nature," even in our time. The springs and rain

The Undercliff, near Ventnor. By John Fullwood.

wash out a layer of bluish clay which lies beneath the sandstone crag. The crag then topples down and rolls to the foot of the clay slope. Then the exposed clay slides down over the fallen rocks and in time undermines a second shelf of cliff. Below St. Catharine's Down these slips form rivers of clay and rocks extending many hundred feet. Two enormous fragments stand on either side of the road, which is itself

protected by strong low walls against the rolling rocks, which might at any time fall and block it. One of the largest landslips in this part of the Undercliff took place in 1799, and was described by the rector of Niton, who saw it. "The whole of the ground from the cliff above," he wrote, "was seen in motion, which motion was directed towards the sea, nearly in a straight line. The ground above, beginning with a great founder from the base of the cliff, kept gliding down, and at last rushed on with violence totally changing the surface of all the ground to the west of the brook that runs into the sea, so that now the whole is convulsed and scattered about as if done by an earthquake. Everywhere are chasms that a horse or cow might sink into and disappear." Between St. Catharine's Point and Black Gang Chine is yet another form of coast scenery. The road runs under a line of stratified *yellow* sandstone cliff rising from a setting of close turf. The ground sloping from the road to the sea is of the "tumultuous" kind, much given to slipping and disorder. But the long line of sandstone cliff above is singularly beautiful. It is seamed by innumerable deep horizontal shelves eaten out by the weather, and these again are divided vertically by rounded hollows, so that the whole surface of the cliff is marked by tier above tier of ornamental mouldings. The colour is a rich warm yellow; but on the ledges and shelves of the rock so many gray, orange, and purple lichens, and patches of sea-pink grow, that the colour of the whole is a blend of yellow, gray, and pink. Above Black Gang Chine this cliff ends in a great bastion, the home of hundreds of jackdaws and stock-doves and many kestrels. So few persons ever leave the shore or road to pry into the upper cliff that the birds are quite tame; and at midday when the hot sun warms the shelves of rock the whole cliff face is musical with the cooing of the stock-doves, while others with the jackdaws drop in from over the summit from moment to moment, and spreading their wings descend like parachutes to their resting places on the crag.

The Black Gang Chine is as desolate and unattractive as the yellow cliffs above it are bright and beautiful. "Chine" is in Dorsetshire and Hampshire, the name given to any part of a cliff which is so broken as to allow an ascent from the beach to the ground above. Along the Bournemouth shore these "chines" are often singularly beautiful, their sides covered with heather, fern, and flowers, and rhododendrons, while

Blackgang Chine. After Peter De Wint.

often a clear stream runs through the bottom. The name extends to the Isle of Wight, and Luccombe Chine, east of Ventnor, need not fear comparison with the most beautiful of those on the mainland coast of Hampshire. But Black Gang Chine, which descends for more than 200 feet from the verge to the sea, is a natural channel for the gradual ooze and subsidence of black clay, iron gray marl, and *débris*, which the streamlet and land springs are constantly diluting till they are set in motion, and crawl in sluggish streams, like cooling lava, to the sea. Its

Brighstone Church. By R. Serle.

appearance is more strange than beautiful, but from the eastern verge of the funnel the whole of the "Back of the Island" is seen as far as the Needle Rocks, a wide bight, with a coast-line of twenty miles without a single harbour or break, by any considerable river or estuary in the long forbidding line of cliffs. No town, or anything larger than a fishing hamlet breaks this desolate coast. Here begins the wide, flat, cultivated plain which runs back through the centre of the island to Newport. It is as purely agricultural a district as any in High Suffolk or Cambridgeshire, unwatered by rivers, harbourless where it touches

the coast, and reminded that it is bounded by the sea only when some more than unusually notable shipwreck, such as that of the *Eider*, takes place on the Atherfield Rocks. This plain is bounded on the west by the line of chalk downs which hits the coast between Brook and Freshwater, and runs on in that tremendous line of chalk precipices, broken only by the cove of Freshwater Gate, till it is cut short across as if by a knife at Scratchell's Bay. Beneath their inland front lies Brighstone, or Brixton, the parish of which Bishop Ken and Samuel Wilberforce were rectors, and where William Wilberforce the elder, died.

East of Ventnor, towards Dunnose Point, there is no such sudden change from beauty to desolation as takes place beyond St. Catharine's Point. The woods and streams of Bonchurch which lie beneath the buttressed wall of the down, widen out into a broad and beautiful wilderness known as the Landslip. Its appearance belies its rather ominous name. It has nothing in common with the squalor and confusion of the landslips west of Ventnor. Probably the fall of cliff was on such an immense scale, that all movement has since ceased, and nature has had time to repair and beautify the ruins, aided by the finest climate in England. Some two hundred acres of ground, studded with groves, thickets, and rocks, and covered with innumerable flowers, are backed by a semicircular wall of cliff on the north, and washed below by the Channel waves. The cliff is as beautifully wooded as the ground at its foot. It resembles the coombes and gorges in the Mendip Hills; ivy, moss, and yellow wallflowers, spring out of every crevice, and trees and shrubs, rise level with the fields which run up to the crest of the ravine. Thence the eye looks level with their tops, or searches the whole of the glades and recesses of the sea-girt wood hundreds of feet below. From the hill above the Landslip, across the wide waters of Sandown Bay, are seen the long white wall of Culver Cliffs, and the fortress on the summit of Bembridge Down.

The Landslip may be said to mark the eastern, as St. Catharine's Point does the western end of the Undercliff region. It is by far the most obviously pretty, unusual, and attractive portion of the island, from what must be called the "modern" point of view. Fifty years ago it was unknown to the world, and scarcely visited even by the islanders. This was less strange than might be supposed. The huge

Bonchurch

Luccombe Chine. By John Fullwood.

down shut it off from the rest of the island like a wall. Even now, when the train emerges from the tunnel through Boniface Down there is an impression analogous to that which might be produced by a journey through the centre of a Maritime Alp, and an arrival on the shore of the Mediterranean. Except for the tiny meadows, the Undercliff was not cultivated, and could not be cultivated, hence there was no temptation to migrate there.

The inland slope was long a favourite district ; on it is one of the finest houses in the island, Appledurcomb, the home of the Worsley family, so often referred to by Sir John Oglander. But beyond its crest the ancient population of the island did not care to penetrate.

CHAPTER IV

BRADING AND THE "ISLE OF BEMBRIDGE"

Sir John Oglander of Nunwell, near Brading—The representative man of the island—A link between the old and new—His memoirs—Their quaintness and value—His autobiography—Description of the island and of his contemporaries—His loyalty to Charles I.—Illustrative extracts from the published portions of the memoirs, and some unpublished papers—Brading and Brading Haven—Its ancient and recent reclamation—Present state—St. Helen's roads—Old sea fights—The mutiny of the fleet at St. Helen's—Bembridge Harbour—Bembridge—Whitecliff Bay and Culver Cliffs—The Culver falcons—Antiquity of the eyrie—Yaverland Manor—The Russell family—Sir Theodore Russell killed leading the island levy—Destruction of Woolverton by the French—Ghosts—Its story typical of the early history and sufferings of the islanders.

ANY inquirer into the history of the Isle of Wight, however limited his researches, will look back with pleasure to the day on which he first made acquaintance with the personality of Sir John Oglander of Nunwell, whose ancient house still stands near Brading.

He is a link between the old and the new, between Isabella de Fortibus, the last of the feudal lords—in this case a lady—of the island, who is a very real and living person in Sir John's mind, when in historical vein, and the mixed and conflicting modern era of county councils and centralisation. The head of an ancient and distinguished family, who had held their estate in the island since the days of Henry I.—they hold it still—he was in the reign of James I. and Charles I. *the representative man*, of what he fondly calls "owre island." It would take more space than is available, and is perhaps scarcely necessary in this short notice of the island, to dwell on the evidences of unusual culture and education which the leading country gentlemen of this period possessed. It is evident from most of the voluminous writings of the Revolution that in addition to native wit, there was much education and refinement as well

as practical experience and good sense among the landed proprietors on both sides, in the struggles of the Revolution. Sir John himself was educated at Balliol, as was his father before him. But he makes no claims on this account, though his admiration for his friend Sir Richard Worsley of Appledurcomb, whose descendant, a later Sir Richard Worsley, made such good use of Sir John's artless writings in his valuable *History of the Isle of Wight*, constantly betrays his respect for "ye mann of learning." But Sir John was observant, genial, and quaintly in earnest. Circumstances placed him among the leading men of his country—for the Wight was even then more detached in interests from the "adjacent island of Great Britain" than is readily conceivable at this short distance of time; and he was impelled to set down from day to day, in his own quaint phrase, an account of events and persons, ranging from his reception of Charles I., whether in the days of his prosperity, when he visited the island as a mighty monarch to review his troops destined for the French war, or later in his lowest fortunes as a refugee, to the merits or failings of his country neighbours, and the pattern of the new French clogs which he brought as a present to his lady. Much of the "Oglander manuscript" has been published.[1] Much still remains unprinted at Nunwell his ancient home. But whatever the subject of Sir John's remarks he is always shrewd and original. His accounts of contemporary matter are freely referred to in other chapters. Here we propose to present the reader to the Knight of Nunwell himself, as he wrote down what he saw and thought in "owre island" from day to day.

Sir John on himself.

[This extract is purely personal, and the quaint element predominates. Sir John had written an obituary notice of his father, Sir William Oglander, and pleased with the effect, went on to do the same for himself. He became "rather mixed" at times, between the third and first person, being unused to the form of composition known as "writing one's own epitaph."]

[1] *Extracts from the MSS. of Sir John Oglander, Kt., of Nunwell, deputy-governor of Portsmouth, deputy-lieutenant of the Isle of Wight.* Edited, with an introduction and notes, by W. H. Long. Portsmouth: W. H. Long, 120 High Street.

"The life of Sir John Oglander, Knight, who came to keepe house at Nunwell, Anno Dom. 1607, March ye 7th.

"He wase borne at Eastnunwell, in ye chaumber over ye parlour, May ye 12 Ano. Dom. 1585, and wase nursed att Borderwood by one Cooke's wyfe in a littel tennement of Baronett Worseleyes: he wase brought up in his infancie at Bewlie (Beaulieu), and afterwards put to schoole at Shalfleete in ye island[1] and Winchester; from whence he went

Shalfleet Church. By John Fullwood.

to Baylioll College in Oxon, and had a grownde chamber in ye Bach'lor Courte, nexte to a Inne called ye Cateronwheele [the Catharine wheel] . . . After my father's deth I came to live in ye island, and bwylt moost part of ye house [Nunwell]. . . . I was put into ye commission of ye Peace att ye adge of 22 yeres, when I not well understoode myselve or my

[1] Shalfleet, near Yarmouth. Its ancient church tower is thought to have been once built for defence. The cost of the spire was paid by selling the metal of the bells and of the parish cannon.

place, and was ashamed to sett on ye Bench, as not hauinge then any hayre on my face and less wit . . . h'e was liftennant Governor of Portsmouth, and was Liftennant of ye island, and lived soom tymes at Chicester, and soomtymes at Nuport. . . . also mutch trobled with a payne in his hedd, which wold last him 2 or 3 days . . . but when he came to 40 yeres that miserable payne left him, and he begann to bee mutch healthier in his bodye than before. But then another infirmitie came to him whych wase greate paynes in ye sowles of his feete. He wase of a midling stature, bigge, but not very fatt ; of a moderate dyott, not caring how littel or how coorse if cleane and handsome : for his intellectual parts let his actions judge of him. God send ye island never a woorse for his paynestaking to administer justice upryghtly to every one . . . He lived at a great rate of expense in his housekepinge, for he alwaies kept 3 servinge men and a footbwoye, besydes retaynors : alwaies his coach well horsed (his coach wase ye second that ever wase on ye island) ; he spent usually £800 every year, soe that he coold not lay up mutch. Of all vices he hated drunkenes ; yet he wold play ye good fellowe, and wold not mutch refrayne from drinkinge 2 or 3 healthes."

The State of "Owre Island" 1627.

"The Isle of Wight, since my memorie, is infinitely decayed, for eythor it is by reason of soe many Attourneys that hathe of late made this theyr habitation . . . or else wanting ye good bargaynes, they [the people] were wont to bye from men of warre, who also vented all oure commodoties att verie high pryces, and readie money was easie to be hadd for all things. Now peace and lawe hath beggared us all, soe that within my memorie manie of ye gentlemen and almost all ye yeomandrie ar undon. . . . .

"I have heard it on tradition, and partly knowe it to be true, that not only heretofore was no lawyer nor attourneye in our island ; but in Sir George Carey's tyme an attourney comynge to settle in ye island, wase, by his commaunde, with a pownd of candels hanging att his breeche, with belles about his legges, hunted owt of ye island ; insoemutch that oure awncestors lived here soe quietly and securelie, beynge neythor troobled to go to London nor Winchester, soe they seldom or

never went owt of ye island, insomuch that when they went to London (thinkynge itt an East India voiage), they alwaies made theyre willes, supposing noe trooble lyke to travayle."

The Defences of the Island.

During the war against France, though the Duke of Buckingham made Portsmouth his headquarters, the islanders were persuaded that the

Ryde One Hundred Years ago. From an old print after T. Walmsley.

usual French invasion would be attempted. The island militia were very efficient; each parish had its field-gun, and from a "trewe noate" of the strength of the island, prepared by Sir John Oglander, it appears that they amounted to 2,000 men, with a Newport band of 300. "Watches and wards, with beacons ready for firing, were kept on all the downs and headlands, and every point and creek was jealously guarded. The watchmen with loaded muskets and lighted matches were changed at

sunrise and sunset, and were visited by a 'searcher' twice during the day, and three times at night."[1] Sir John was most eager to have Sandown Castle, then called Sandam Castle, and the other coast defences put in repair, and for the "Isle of Freshwater" to be made a place of refuge. "For my parte, I think ye chardge that by Sir George Carey was bestowed upon Caresbrooke Castel was to no purpose, and I shold be loft on any occasion to mewe myself up there. If that charge had been made at ffreshwater Gate, itt might have made it both invincible, and a brave receptacle for us, and owre cattel, if att any tyme wee should be beaten att ye landinge. I am now indeavouring in these daungerous tymes to see weathor I can willinglie and voluntarily rayse 100 horse in owre island, and to turn all owre fild-pieces into drakes;[2] what good service we do must be done at ye landinge." Note the spirit and pluck of the islanders in their own defence. Sir John managed to beg a large sum of money from the Government, and a new fort was built at "Sandam." Moreover, his own "owld clerke, Tobye Kempe," who lies buried near his master, was deputed to keep the accounts at two shillings a day; and soon Sir John had the pleasure of seeing a garrison there.

"Rychard Cooke, of Budbridge, wase a captayne of Sandam Castle, a brave fellow, came always to Arreton Church in his wrought velvet gowne, and 12 of his soldiers with habbardes wayghted upon him."

"*An Egyptian Thraldom.*"

But of trouble there was no end. The king billeted a regiment of 1,000 Scots on the island, and Sir John was nearly worn out before he got rid of them.

"Never entertayn moor sowldiers into youre island, beinge a thinge you maye refuse, and an unsupportable troble and miserye, *espetiollie Scotchmen*, for I may trulye say, since ye Danes beinge here, theyre never was a greater miserye hapened to us than ye bilitinge of these Lorde-danes. . . . . On ye 3rd of September wee were freed from owre Egiption thraldome or lyke Spane from their Moores."

[1] Introduction to extract from the Oglander MS. by Mr. W. H. Long.

[2] Light field guns used as "horse artillery."

Arrested and Sent to London.

In the published extracts of the MS. there is a gap from 1632 to 1647. In the interim Sir John, a good Royalist, was arrested and sent to London to answer before Parliament for a remark that he would give £500 for king to be in possession of the fleet. There is no published part of Sir John's notes dealing with this period. But by the kindness of Mr. John Glynn Oglander, the present owner of Nunwell, I have seen the original warrant which was sent to Colonel Carne to arrest Sir John.

It is written on a small piece of paper, which when folded would go into an ordinary envelope, and runs thus :—

"At the committee of the Lords and Commons for the safety of the Kingdom. These are to pray and authorise you to send up in safe custody to the committee the person of Sir John Oglander, Knight, to answer such matters as at his coming shall be objected to him. These shall be your sufficient warrant. 13 June.

"Signed (1643).

"Pembroke.
Montgomery.
Manchester.
W. Say & Seale.
H. Vane.
Thomas Barrington.
Jo. Pym."

Sir John has treated this document with quiet contumely. In one corner he has scribbled "my warrant," and on the back he has tried a quill pen. But he was heavily fined, his wife died while he was in custody, and his high character and patriotism in regard to the island were ignored wholly.

He entertains the King.

It was in part his known loyalty that induced the king to risk himself in the island. Sir John's account of his arrival is given elsewhere. But he did much to cheer the king in the early days of his confinement at Carisbrooke : entertained him in his house, and presented him with a purse of £1,000 in gold, considerably more than a year's expenses of the

knight's household. He was also present at the last speech made by Charles at Newport to the Commissioners, in which he predicted his own fate, before he was seized by the soldiers and deported to London. The king spoke "with mutch cheerfulnesse and a serene countenance, and carridge free from any disturbance; and then hee p'rted from ye Lordes and Commissioners, leavinge manie tender impressiones, if not in them, in ye other hearers."

Purely Personal.

Much of Sir John's memoranda seems to have been designed for the reading of his own family. He had a very great curiosity and pride in all relating to the personal life of the past Oglanders, and expected his descendants to share this feeling. Perhaps the oddest evidence of this care for the enlightenment of his posterity as to his own personality, next after that in his description of himself, was recently found in a small box, probably the one which is referred to more than once in his MS., in which were a number of very old deeds and papers, tied up by handsome pieces of gold lace, silver lace, and narrow bands of silk, plaited into patterns with colours of green and white, brown and white, or blue and white; all these laces have silver or gold tags at the end. A note written inside the lid of the box by Sir John explains the mystery :—

"These Quicknesses that are here tyed up weare so done by Sir John Oglander with his owne poynts, every one of them haue been worne by him. And it may bee that in futor tyme somme of his successors may wonder at the fashion. Witness the same, my hand—John Oglander."

The laces are the "points" which laced the trunk hose of the day to the doublet, and in a fine portrait of Sir John in his best velvet suit, he appears wearing a set of silver lace points, with the tags showing all round the waist.

Sir John on his Neighbours.

His greatest friend was Sir Richard Worsley, of Appledurcomb. Sir Richard had lost an eye at Winchester, but was "wonderful studious, insomutch that he affected no counterye spoortes, eyther hawkinge or huntinge, but spent his tyme wholly at his booke when he wase alone;

verie merry, and a notable good fellowe in companie that he knew. *He delighted much in flinging of cuschions at one another's heddes only in sporte and for exercise;* until that with a cuschion at Gatcombe I was lyke to put out his other eye."

Sir Richard Worsley was buried with his daughter at the fine church

Carved Tombstones and Dial, Godshill. By R. Serle.

at Godshill, in the centre of the island. "She was buryed," writes Sir John, "by her father in ye chauncel at Godshill Church, where sutch a father, sutch a daughter lyeth; both sutch as I must confess I never knewe any that exceeded them."

A Bad Neighbour.

"Mr. Robert Dyllington was the sonn of one Goddardes daughter, a merchaunt in Hampton, after whose base and miserable conditions he mutch tooke, insomutch that his unkell, Sir Robert, could hardly endure him.

"Marrying with a woman lyke himself, they grew soe miserably base, as in one instance for all, when Anie came to his house with horses he hath often been found in ye rack and manger takinge awaie the haye; but by these thrifty coorses, from one of ye meanest in ye island, he grew soe ritch as he purchased Motson of Mr. Cheke." Sir John at last "sent him one who had a Baronnetship to sell," which he bought cheap, and "is nowe inferior to none."

Another Way to Grow Rich.

"Mr. Emanuel Badd was a verie poor man's sonn, and bound apprentice to one Bernard, a shoomaker of Nuport. But by God's blessing and ye loss of 5 wives he grewe very ritch, pourchased ye Priory (St. Helen's Priory) and mutch other lands in ye island."

Sir John lies buried in the Oglander chapel, in the beautiful church at Brading.

Even his monument is of no common kind. It is an effigy of life-size, clad in complete armour, carved in wood, and painted of the natural colours. The modelling of the hands and face is very lifelike—the veins showing, the brow slightly furrowed, the eyes open and dark, as is the hair and moustache. Above him, in a niche, lies a tiny effigy of his favourite son George, who died at the age of twenty-three, and opposite is a monument to his father, Sir William Oglander.

The following touching entry in his notes refers to the death of his favourite son :—

"Wooldest thou know wheather Sir John Oglander had an elder son than William? I resolve thee he had: his name was George, after his grandfather Moores[1] name. And I tell ye he was sutch a sonn as ye Isle of Wight never bredd ye lyke before, nor ever will ye lyke agayne. *Periendo, Perio.* O George, my son George, thou wast to goode for

[1] Sir George Moore, of Losely, near Guildford.

mee, all partes naturol and artificioll did soe abound in thee, that hadst thou lived, thou hadst been an honour to thy family and thy countery. But thou art dedd, and with thee all my hopes. *Vale, Vale, tempore sequor.*"

The fine church is all that is left of the glories of Brading, which once stood at the head of Brading Haven. Now it is left at two miles distance from the sea by the reclamation of its harbour. The town still preserves its parish stocks and a tiny town hall, probably the smallest in England, and a bull-ring, with the large iron ring to which the bull was fastened when baited.

Even in the time of the Commonwealth it was much decayed. "Bradinge in Queen Elizabeth's tyme wase a handsome towne," writes Sir John Oglander. "There weare in itt many good liviers that myght dispence £40 a yeare a peece, now not one."

From Brading town to St. Helen's stretched until recently the wide estuary of Brading Haven. Now, with the exception of enough to make a useful harbour at Bembridge, this great estuary, where Sir John Oglander's father would shoot "forty fowl of a night," has been reclaimed by the directors of the "Liberator" Companies.

The nature of the appeal made by this wild scheme in the first instance to the daring speculators who, seventeen years ago, embarked the resources of the company in an enterprise of which not only the practical difficulty, but the financial worthlessness, had already been proved by actual experiment, as early as the reign of James I., will probably remain among the unknown factors of commercial failure. The belief in the possibility of getting "Something for nothing," due to the notion that land won from the sea is a kind of treasure-trove, may have quieted the first misgivings of shareholders. But the fact that Sir Hugh Myddelton, the engineer of the New River, though a "crafty fox and subtle citizen," as Sir Oglander noted, had ultimately failed, not only to maintain his reclamation of Brading Haven, but to make it pay while the dam lasted, was well known in the history of engineering; and though the mechanical difficulties might be overcome by modern machinery, the nature of the harbour bottom for the growth or non-growth of crops and grasses could hardly have changed. Briefly, the past history of the Brading reclamation was as follows. In 1620 Sir Hugh Myddelton dammed the mouth of

the river Yar at Bembridge, opposite Spithead, and on the seven hundred acres of land so reclaimed he "tried all experiments in it; he sowed wheat, barley, oats, cabbage-seed, and last of all rape-seed, which proved best; but all the others came to nothing." "The nature of the ground, after it was inned," wrote Sir John Oglander, "was not answerable to what was expected, for almost the moiety of it next to the sea was a light, running sand, and of little worth. The inconvenience was in it, that the sea brought so much sand and ooze and seaweed that these choked up the passage for the water to go out, insomuch that I am of opinion that if the sea had not broke in there would have been no current left for the water to go out, so that in time it would have laid to the sea, or else the sea would have drowned the whole country. Therefore, in my opinion, it is not good meddling with a haven so near the main ocean."

This experiment had cost in all £7,000, when the sea broke in ten years later, and Sir Hugh Myddelton's fields once more became harbour-bottom, and cockles and winkles once more grew where his meagre crops of oats and rape had struggled for existence. Some years later an offer was made to repair the dam for £4,400, but this fell through. No one thought it worth while to spend the money, though small arms and creeks of the harbour were from time to time banked off and reclaimed by adjacent landowners. The attempt which had baffled Sir Hugh Myddelton was suddenly revived by the Liberator directors seventeen years ago. The sea was banked out, almost on the lines of Sir Hugh Myddelton's dam, a straight channel of double the size necessary for the mere drainage of the higher levels was cut for the passage of the river and the holding of its waters during high-tide, when the sluices are automatically closed; and a railway and quay were added, with a hotel at Bembridge. Solid and costly as their embankment was, the sea broke in, steam-engines and machinery were toppled from the dykes and buried in the mud, workmen were drowned, and the whole enterprise was within an ace of becoming a little Panama. But at last the sea was beaten, 643 acres of weltering mud were left above water, and the reclamation, such as it is, is probably won for ever. But at what a cost! Four hundred and twenty thousand pounds are debited to the Brading reclamation, of which vast sum we may assume that £100,000 were expended on the railway

quay and buildings, leaving £320,000 as the price of 643 acres of sea-bottom.

As reclamation of mud-flats and foreshores has lately been much advocated as a means of providing "work and wages," and of adding to the resources of the country, the present state and probable future of the land won from the sea at Brading is a matter of some interest, omitting all considerations of the original cost. We may concede at once that, from the picturesque point of view, the reclaimed harbour is a great

Brading Haven. By John Fullwood.

improvement on the ancient mud-flats. It has added to the Isle of Wight what seems a piece of Holland, covered with green pasture and grazing cattle. This area is as much withdrawn from the intrusion of man as the old lagoon; for as on the mud-flats there were no roads, no rights-of-way, and no footpaths, so the reclamation is a roadless district, secured absolutely to the use of the occupiers, and incidentally to the wild-fowl which swarm by its shallow pools and drains. The broad embanked river runs straight through the centre, and divides into two the level which lies like a green sea between the ring of surrounding hills and the harbour-bank. In this river, the waters of the ancient reclamations

higher up the valley collect during high-water, when the pressure from the sea automatically shuts the sluices, and pour out during low-tide, when the pressure of the sea is removed, through the iron gates, near which lie, with the grooves still sound and sharply cut, parts of the sluices made for Sir Hugh Myddelton of English oak in the year 1621. The general shape of the reclamation is an oval, with one of the smaller ends facing the sea and the other abutting on ancient dams near Brading, two miles higher up the valley. The whole of this has been converted into firm, dry land ; neither is its quality so inferior as Sir Hugh Myddelton judged. Possibly the improvement in the seventeen years during which the old sea-bottom has been exposed to sun and rain, has been proportionately more rapid than in the ten in which it was exposed to the air after 1620. Then half the area was described as consisting of "light, running sand of little worth," though the upper portion promised to become valuable pasture. Those advocates of reclamation of land from the sea, who propose to "leave it to Nature" when the sea has once been barred out, can see at Brading and Bembridge what it is exactly that Nature does, and how far art can help to make old sea-bottom into pasture for cattle, and even into a playground for men and women, in seventeen years. It must be remembered that in this case Nature has been hurried, and made to do her work before her time. Left to itself, the harbour would have silted up in the course of centuries, and the pastures would have grown of themselves on land already covered with the alluvial mould. As it is, the sea was swept from the land, which had to take its chance as it was—mud, sand, shingle, or cockle-beds, just as they came. There was not even an earthworm on the whole six hundred acres to move the soil and help the rain to wash the salt out of it. The wonder is not that the change has taken place so slowly, but that the change from a soil supporting marine vegetable growth to a soil largely covered with grass, clover, and trefoil, has matured so quickly. What was once the head of the bay is now good pasture covered with cattle and letting for 30s. an acre—there are one hundred and fifty acres of this good ground. Nature had already prepared it in part—for it was mud washed from the valley above—and still preserves in contour, though covered with grass, the creeks and "fleets" in which the tide rose and fell. All round the fringes of the flat, where it joins the old shore, the

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earthworms have descended and made a border of fair soil. On one side sewage has been run into the hungrier soil, and there, on a natural level, the true use and place of such experiments is seen. Three crops of grass a year are cut from ground which otherwise would not fetch more than 5s. an acre—a hint, perhaps, for the disposal of some of the London "effluent." There remains a portion of dead, sour greensand on which no herbage grows, though the advance of soil and grass may be noted, like the gradual spread of lichen on a tree. Each patch of rushes, each weed and plantain, gathers a little soil round its roots or leaves, and the oasis spreads until all is joined and made one with the better ground. A cattle-farm and nursery garden occupy the centre of the seaward curve. The farm is already surrounded by rich grasses, clover, and sweet herbage, and the garden is a wonder of fertility. Not only vegetables, but roses, chrysanthemums, carnations, lavender, and other garden flowers are there reared in profusion; and in the winter masses of mauve veronica are in blossom. In walking over what is now good pasture, the evidences of the recent nature of all this agricultural fertility crop up on every side. Where the turf lies in knolls and hillocks, the sea-shells may still be seen lying bleached or purple among the roots of the grass, and what would be taken for snail-shells elsewhere are found to be little clusters of the periwinkles and mussels for which Brading Haven was once famous. But perhaps the greatest success in the conversion of the old harbour to daily use is the present condition of the "light, running sand" near the sea. This sand must have a stratum of clay beneath it, for groves of poplar trees planted on it are now in vigorous growth. But for some years the land lay barely covered with cup-moss, lichen, and thin, poor grass, a haunt of rabbits and shore-birds. It is now converted into a golf-ground, and studded at short intervals with level lawns of fine turf for "putting greens," which daily extend their area, and promise before long to convert the "running sands" into a beautiful and park-like recreation ground. The beauty of the whole scene is much increased by the number of half-wild swans, which are constantly in movement, either swimming upon the pools and streams, or flying to and from the sea. These swans are among the natural agents busied in aiding the reclamation of the land. They feed almost entirely upon the weeds which would otherwise choke up the dykes, and it is believed that two

Sandown Bay.

swans do as much work in keeping the waterways free and open as could be done by a paid labourer.

The history and fortunes of a given area of land are the constant subject of story. The rise and fall of the importance of a particular part of the sea, except perhaps as constituting a fishery, has seldom been made the theme of a historian. Yet there are certain areas of sea off the English coasts which have an average population much greater than that of the adjacent land, and have maintained this pre-eminence for centuries. There are the great roadsteads off the English coasts, places in which ships and their crews congregate as naturally for food, shelter, or refit, as do the sea-fowl off certain parts of the coast. The proximity of a great harbour is not a necessary feature of such roadsteads. The fleets of vessels which in certain winds lie off the "Downs" in the Channel have little or no communication with the shore. But usually the roadstead lies off a harbour, and the permanence of the port makes the occupation of the adjacent sea a matter of course, so long as the harbour continues to be used. For some reason this has not been the case at Portsmouth and Spithead.

St. Helen's Roads, off St. Helen's Point, and opposite the mouth of the old Brading Haven, now Bembridge Harbour, was once the favourite anchoring ground of the British fleets when about to leave for foreign service; and their communications with the island were almost as frequent and important as with Portsmouth itself. The fleets used to leave Spithead and anchor off St. Helen's, sending to Bembridge, at the point where a spring of fresh water runs down from the sloping cliff to the sea, to fill their water casks, and to the little village of Bembridge itself for their fresh meat, so long as they remained, which was taken out daily to the ships in "row-barges." Hence the old inn was originally called the "Row-Barge;" and the country people, farmers, and village tradesfolk profited greatly by the presence of the fleet. For a time the Isle of Wight held the place for which it seemed naturally suited in those days, of a victualling-ground for the minor needs of the fleet. Sir John Oglander, long before this, had foreseen this possibility, though he did not expect the development which brought the ships to the mouth of the harbour which lay almost in touch with his own park at Nunwell. He proposed that a new port and road should be

made at Cowes for a "rendezvous." "If the country would have so much discretion as to make good use of that harbour, as first to have an honest man to be captain there, to build storehouses, to have by a joint store of all provision, and to have that their rendezvous, and to victuall there, they need no other market nor means to make the island happy and fortunate."

The first account of a British fleet lying for a long period off St. Helen's is preserved in the Fleming Collection at Rydal Hall, and gives the list of ships and "order of array" for an expected battle with the French in 1545. Henry VIII., only two years before his death, drifted into war with both France and Scotland on the burning question of the betrothal of the baby princess, Mary Queen of Scots, to Edward the Prince of Wales. Henry was at that time in the position of a tenant for life of a large estate, who has exhausted the savings of his ancestors and his own credit. He had only two more years to live, but the national, or rather the royal, exchequer was drained. All his father's savings were spent. The whole of the Church property had already been sold in the greatest possible hurry at the lowest possible price. The last financial expedient of debasing the coinage till the proportion of base metal was as four to six, had brought nothing in, and destroyed credit; and Henry, in his old age, found himself threatened with a French invasion, and without means to equip a sufficient fleet.

The Isle of Wight was, as usual, marked for one of the first objectives of the French. The people were warned, the watch-fires laid, Carisbrook Castle victualled and armed, and a fleet, partly equipped from England and partly, as it would seem, hired from the Baltic, was stationed in St. Helen's Roads as a partial protection. The following quaint document gives the list of ships, with indications of the place from which the foreign vessels were hired. It did not amount to more than 100 sail, whereas the French had 200, besides galleys.

"A.D. 1545. Orders concerning the fleet. Thes be the shepes apoynted for the furste front of the wauntiguard [vanguard].

"In primes. The *Great Arragosea* [? the Mary Rose], the *Sampson Lubyke*,[1] the *Trenyte* of Danske [Trinity of Dantzic], the *Mary* of

[1] *Lubyke* signifies that the ship came from Lubeck; *Danske* = of Dantzic; *Hanbrake* = of Hamburg.

Hanbrake, the *Pelicane*, the *Murryan* [the Mary Anne], the *Sepiar* of Nanske.

"The second rancke of the vauntward :—The *Harry-Gracy-a-adewe* [This name was evidently a severe trial to the spelling of the naval officer who drew up the memorandum. He means the *Harry*, *Grace à Dieu*, Henry VIII.'s largest battleship.] The *Venichean* [Venetian], the *Peter Pomygarnate* [Pomegranate], the *Pansys*, the *Greate Galley*, the *Swepstacke*, the *Mennyon* [the Minion], the *Sallow*, the *New Barke*, the *Saule Argaly*.

"The iij rancke of the vauntward :—The *Berste Denar* [what can this mean?] the *Facon Lyfelay*, the *Harry Brestow* [of Bristol], the *Trenyte Rynnegar* [?] the *Mary Jeames* [Mary James], the *Pelgrim* of Dartmouthe, the *Mary Gorge* of Rye [Mary George of Rye], the *Thomas Topkynes* [Thomas Tompkins], the *Jhorges Breyges* [George Brydges], the *Ane Lyfelay* [Anne Lively], the *Jhon the Evangeleste*, the *Thomas Madely*, the *Lartyche*, the *Crystofer Tennet*, the *Mary Fortune*, the *Mary Marten*, the *Trenytye Brestow*."

"Galleys and shepes" on the right and left wings were also named for service, including even pinnaces from the Baltic—the "Runygar pinnes" looks like an attempt at "Reinecke," and is clearly German—down to "iij botes of Rye."

This "scratch" fleet was all the protection on which the islanders could count besides their new forts, some of which were not completed, and the English Admiral, who seems to have had the proper instinct as to the value of a "fleet in being" for the protection of the country from invasion by sea, resolved to do exactly what Admiral Colomb and Captain Mahan have concluded was the right course under such circumstances—to keep his fleet in observation off St. Helen's, where it was fairly protected by the sands and shoals; just as Lord Torrington proposed to do when a superior French fleet threatened the Isle of Wight when William III. was away fighting the rebels in Ireland.[1] Lord Torrington was forced to fight, and be beaten, by the imperative orders of the Queen. Apparently Henry VIII.'s admiral was also pressed by superior authority to fight, and lose the advantage which

[1] Torrington was lying in St. Helen's Roads when the news came that the French fleet was anchored in Freshwater Bay.

a masterly inaction would have secured. The order of the fleet given above was made in pursuance of a decision to force a battle "which, upon the King's determination, should be on Monday, the 10th of August."

If the fleets had been equal in numbers, and the fate of the island in no way concerned, the directions for manœuvres during the engagement might have commended themselves. Under the circumstances though, they are an interesting evidence of the very modern character of the seamanship of the day; they seem based on the assumption that the fleets were even in numbers, though the French force was double that of the English.

The instructions given were most precise; there was to be half a cable length between the ships. The front rank ("the wauntigarde") was to make sail straight to the front of the battle, pass through, and make a short return to the centre, having special regard to the course of the second rank. The ships of the second and third ranks were to lay aboard the principal ships of the enemy, the *Admiral* being reserved for my Lord Admiral.

Every ship of the first rank was to carry a St. George's Cross upon the foretopmast during the fight. Those in the second rank were to carry one upon the main mast, and those in the third rank on the "messel maste top" (mizzen top). The wings were to wait and observe the issue of the battle, and "give succour as they shall see occasion."

Probably the Admiral thought he knew his business better than the king's advisers at Whitehall, for he did not fight any such battle as was sketched in the instructions. He remained in St. Helen's Roads, until the arrival of the French fleet of two hundred sail, and then engaged them partially in the hope of getting them entangled in dangerous waters. The cannonading lasted for two days, and the *Mary Rose* was sunk. It seems evident that the English were driven from St. Helen's, and that the French were for some time off the island, and able to make partial descents.

In the great war at the end of the last century, St. Helen's Roads were in 1797 the scene of what is known to history as the "Mutiny at Spithead."[1] The first refusal of the crews of the fleet to sail was

[1] See an interesting account read by Mr. G. Long, before the Portsmouth Literary Society, published in the *Portsmouth Times*, Dec. 2, 1893.

after the order to leave Spithead. But after the Admiralty had made certain concessions, the fleet weighed and anchored at St. Helen's. There the mutiny broke out afresh. Every ship refused to sail, when Lord Bridport made the signal to leave for Brest, because the Admiralty had taken no steps to fulfil their promises. The "delegates" assembled, and proceeded to the *London*, Admiral Colpoys's ship, with the intention of holding their convention there. The Admiral ordered them to sheer off, which they refused to do. He then ordered the marines to fire into the boats, which they did, killing five men and wounding six. On this becoming known, the seamen rushed in crowds up the hatchways, overpowered the officers, and disarmed the marines. They then seized the first lieutenant, Mr. Peter Boven, who had shot and killed a seaman who had unlashed one of the guns and was proceeding to turn it on the quarter-deck. Admiral Colpoys then took the full responsibility on himself, and, fully expecting to be hanged by the mutineers, made his will and wrote a final letter to Lord Howe explaining what had happened. The seamen, however, delivered him up to the Mayor of Portsmouth for a civil trial!

It was not until the arrival of Lord Howe at St. Helen's, with the fullest assurances that all promises made by the Government should be fulfilled, and that all the mutineers would be pardoned, that the crews returned to order and obedience.

The gain to the health of the neighbourhood, which Sir John Oglander observed was the result of the few years' reclamation of Brading Haven in his day, and which must be even more marked after the permanent reclamation of the mudflats now effected, has not caused any loss of beauty in the existing harbour of Bembridge. The bright, clear waters are no longer a mere covering for weltering mud exposed during the greater part of every tide. The curving dyke, quay, and pier, which form the defence of the reclamation are washed by deep water. The harbour runs back some distance inland so as to form a miniature lake, and is the head-quarters of that modern and charming development of yachting, in which the owner manages and sails his own boat. The harbour looks like a basin specially built to hold these pretty little toys, which in rough weather can be raced round the inner waters, and at other times sail out boldly into the Solent or towards the open Channel.

A recent development of this small yacht racing awards the prize entirely to skill in seamanship—apart from the inevitable accidents of wind or tide. A club owns a number of sailing boats of identical build and rig. The members thus start even, so far as the ship is concerned, and the contest resolves itself into a friendly rivalry in the art of sailing and steering.

A dozen of these boats, with their yellow, tanned sails, dancing over the waters towards the fort on the sand spit, or racing round the harbour while the waves are toppling outside, form a new and dainty feature in the harbour landscape. At the head of the new haven is an ancient tide-mill. This is worked by the outflow of water carried into two very large ponds at high tide. It was originally built by Sir Hugh Myddelton, and is still worked, but the size of the small lakes necessary to accumulate enough water to drive the wheel after the ebb has begun to flow raises doubts whether the use of "tidal energy" is ever likely to be a financial success. But the old mill is a picturesque object at the head of the harbour; there the swans assemble to eat the grain which may have fallen into the water where the sacks are unloaded; and the cormorants at high tide dive almost beneath its walls in search of the eels which make their way towards the in-fall of the fresh stream. As the tide ebbs they fly out to sit on the buoys which mark the entrance to the harbour, and at the same time the swans which are feeding inland in the reclaimed portion of the haven take wing and fly in pairs, or even in larger numbers, over the harbour out to sea.

The sight and sound of the swans in flight is one of the most picturesque accompaniments of a sail in Bembridge harbour. They fly with rapid beats of the wing, high enough to clear the masts of both yachts and country craft in the basin, each stroke of their wings producing a musical, ringing sound, something like that of a tubular bell.

If the rest of the island disappeared, the "Isle de Bembridge" as it is called on the excellent old maps which were made in France with a view to its invasion and conquest, would still give a very accurate idea of the general character of the whole of "the Wight." It has its harbour and estuary, its river, rising close to the southern shore, like the western "Yar," and running northwards toward the Solent, and in

its land contour presents all the typical features of the island. Near the harbour mouth the low cliff is covered with trees almost to where the pebbles touch its foot, and the pretty houses look on the blue sea set between groves of Mediterranean pines. The eastern point, called the Foreland, rises above a long and dangerous reef of black rocks called Bembridge Ledge. But the fields are cultivated to the very edge of the sea, and "Foreland Farm" with its tall elms, comfortable barns, stables and cow-houses, and carefully tilled arable fields sown with the usual root and corn crops to the brow of the cliff, is no more modified in its appearance and management than if it stood in the centre of the island. At the back of the Bembridge peninsula are White Cliff Bay, another and not less beautiful Alum Bay, and the splendid ridge of Bembridge Down running, just as Freshwater Down does, parallel to the sea, with its southern side scarped into an immense precipice of glittering chalk.

Until recently there was not a single house visible from Whitecliff Bay, and at present the number is limited to a single building, much beaten by winter storms. The cliffs of this beautiful semicircle correspond in their general order to those of Alum Bay; but the clay slopes to the left and centre are firmer, steeper, and covered with a rich growth of golden grass, brambles, flowers, and waving "mare's tail," and in other places with masses of blackthorn, and beds of scarlet and yellow osiers. The bright coloured sands which lie between the clay and the chalk are less brilliant and show fewer colours than those at Alum Bay. The vertical strata are also thicker, and stand in peaked scarps, between each of which and the next is a "chine" deep in bracken and set with flowers. The point corresponding to that which in Alum Bay ends in the Needle Rocks, is at Whitecliff Bay an abrupt precipice of chalk, with a submarine reef jutting from its foot. This precipice closes the bay, and is the pillar which marks the eastern approach between sea and crag to the foot of the Culver Cliff.

Though not so lofty as those at Freshwater, it is equally beautiful, whether seen from above, where a narrow path goes down to a cave, called the Hermit's Hole, or from its foot where the retreating tide leaves space enough to stand below, and look up to the summit. The different exposure of the chalk alters its character at each succeeding

bastion. In some it is so smooth as not to give a hold even to the creeping samphire ; in others the juts and ledges are covered by plants and lichens, and haunted by nesting gulls and cormorants. Every year the raven and the peregrine falcon make their eyrie in the Culver Cliff. The birds may be seen on any day throughout the year, never leaving the cliff face for any length of time, and often rearing their young in spite of the cragsmen.

The antiquity of this peregrine eyrie can be proved by documents.

The Manor House, Yaverland. By John Fullwood.

In June 1564, Queen Elizabeth issued a warrant to Sir Richard Worsley, Captain of the Isle of Wight, to search for hawks stolen from the Queen's land in the island, and for committing to ward and examining the "malefactors," who had been faulty of this "stealth and presumtuous attempt." The warrant, which was issued at Richmond and signed by Lords North, Dudley, Pembroke, Howard, and Sir W.

Cecil—a curious instance of the keenness with which the Tudor sovereigns guarded their rights—does not specify whether the nests robbed were at Culver or Freshwater ; but tradition says the former. The Culver eyrie supplied falcons to the island gentry in the days of James I., for Mr. George Oglander, "had a lanorett that was bred in ye White Cliff on Bimbridge, which was ye best hawk with ye worst lookinge to, that wase in England ; for they nevor took care of her, but gave her meat in ye foote, scarce evor tyed her, but lett her scratch for bones with ye dogges ; and when they came afield they cast her off, and she wold followe ye dogges and kill whatsoever did rise, partriche, phesant, bitteron, hearon, hare or coney." There is no place on the English coast where this rare falcon can be seen so easily as on the White Cliff at Bembridge. The writer has visited it some twenty times, and never missed seeing one or a pair of these representatives of what is perhaps the oldest family remaining in the island.

The beautiful Jacobean manor house of Yaverland stands on the site of what was the ancient home of the Lords, not only of the Manor of Yaverland, but of the Isle of Bembridge, so far as its protection and defence demanded a captain. It was granted to Sir William Russell, an ancestor of the Duke of Bedford, by Edward I. There the people of the island used to send the first news of the coming of the French, and the Lords of Yaverland would summon their men and lead the array of the island. When the French landed at Bembridge in 1340 Sir Theobald Russell, of Yaverland, met them and drove them back to their ships, but was himself killed in the fight. There is a persistent tradition that the little church which stands by the manor house was built, not on the spot, but at Woolverton a short distance off, on the shore of the ancient Brading Haven. The local story is that the town of Woolverton was burnt by the French and every person killed but one, before the Knight of Yaverland could come to help them. The site of the old town is well authenticated, and is now covered by a thick wood called the "Centurion's Copse" (St. Urian's Copse according to antiquaries). The stones of the *Norman* chapel at Woolverton were taken to Yaverland when Sir William Russell built the church at Yaverland for the convenience of his household. The road, which anciently ran by Woolverton, is now carried higher up the hill-side above, a change made, according

to the same tradition, because the ghosts of the dead people of Woolverton haunted the ruins where they made their last stand against the French.

The traces of this ancient town which was strangled out of existence in a night, standing on the shores of a harbour which is now dry land, and called by a name dating from an earlier period than the foundation of the town itself, are a typical example of the history of the island and the sufferings of its inhabitants in its old and evil days.

Map of the Isle of Wight.

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